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SIXPENCE Edited by Sir John Hammerton MAY 28, 1943

TUNISIAN ARABS WELCOME A BRITISH SERGEANT at Chaouach, N.W. of Medjez-el-Bab, which Gen. Anderson's men captured on April 10, 1943. This N.C.O. of the Field Security Police, who managed successfully to evade his German captors in Tunis and rejoin his comrades of the 1st Army, describes in fluent Arabic the Axis defeat in this sector. These Arabs were able to return to their homes at Toukabeur, a near-by village.

Photo, British Official: Crown Copyright

THE BATTLE FRONTS

by Maj.-Gen. Sir Charles Gwynn, K.C.B., D.S.O.

ON May 6, 1943 the battle of Tunisia was decisively won by a blitzkrieg attack following on a series of desperate encounters in which the enemy's troops were exhausted and his reserves expended. The enemy had been out-fought, out-generalled, and induced to make the mistakes that no doubt General Alexander hoped he would make.

The world stood amazed when it was realized that within two and a half weeks after the 8th Army's initial attack on April 19 at Enfidaville, the boasted, impregnable Axis stronghold had been penetrated, and that nothing remained but to mop up the fragments of its defeated garrison. A blow had been struck at German military prestige almost as heavy as it had received at Stalingrad. The confidence of the German nation and its satellites in the competence of the High Command which had thus twice wilfully exposed its armies to disaster must be approaching vanishing point. Will belief in the effectiveness of the elaborate wall of fortifications which fringes the coastline of Europe survive? Will the German people now realize that the amateur armies of the democratic nations are as formidable fighters as the professional soldiers of the Reich, and better equipped?

The storm is still brewing in Russia; and it may break before this article is published. Meanwhile, there seems every possibility that part at least of the German bridgehead in the Kuban may meet the fate of the bridgehead in Tunisia. The notable superiority which the Russian Air Force is steadily gaining over the Luftwaffe may prove as important a factor as the air superiority established by the Allies in Tunisia.

NORTH AFRICA

No one expected the final phase of the battle of Tunisia to develop with such amazing rapidity. The enemy in his outer defence ring had positions of exceptional natural strength, and these had been artificially improved with the usual German thoroughness. The position did not lack depth, for behind the mountain strongholds there were second lines of defence almost equally strong, in addition to the fortress of Bizerta itself and the inner defences of Tunis and Cape Bon.

WITH fifteen divisions of picked and experienced troops, Von Arnim had a formidable army with which to conduct a protracted defence if he handled it skilfully and economically. Except in the matter of armour and petrol supply there was no immediate prospect that he would run short of munitions or food. Although he could not hope to equal the immense weight of artillery that could be concentrated against him, that is a disadvantage the defence always experiences. On the other hand, in minefields he had a weapon which has proved highly effective in strengthening the power of defence, and he had ample supplies of mines to enable him to develop its use to the utmost.

The chief disadvantage he suffered from was inferiority in the air, owing to the limited number of airfields available for short-range aircraft and to shortage of petrol. There can be no doubt that the supremacy in the air established by the Allies, if not the main cause of the initial breakdown of the enemy's defence, contributed immensely to its rapid and complete collapse. Valuable as had been air cooperation during the initial attacks on the enemy's defences, it was in exploitation of success and in pursuit that air supremacy became the decisive factor.

Credit for victory must primarily be given to the skill and courage of the attacking infantry, which can seldom have been equalled, and to the support given by artillery. It was their efforts which wore down the enemy's defences and opened the way for the decisive exploitation by aircraft and armour which produced such astoundingly rapid results.

It may be long before the full account of the exploits of the fighting troops can be fully recorded, but it can already be seen with what consummate generalship their efforts were directed. It is abundantly clear that the enemy was not merely out-fought and crushed by greater weight of armament, but that he was completely out-generalled.

THE sequence of General Alexander's operations is interesting. First came the very quick attack of the 8th Army on the Enfidaville line, which drove the enemy back to his main position. Some surprise was expressed by the critics that the 1st Army did not attack simultaneously. Presumably the reasons were that the 8th Army attack was only a preliminary operation, intended to establish a threat to the enemy's southern flank while the regrouping of Alexander's command was in progress. Faced with a particularly strong position, with its advanced depots probably still insufficiently stocked for a prolonged major effort, the 8th Army had little chance of achieving decisive success. Its main task was to mislead the enemy and to contain a large part of the strength he had available.

The 1st Army with which Alexander meant to make his decisive attack had a considerable distance to advance and a number of enemy strong-points to capture before it had a reasonable chance of effecting a breakthrough. Its initial attacks began two days after the 8th Army attack and in combination with the action of the French towards Pont du Fahs served further to mislead Von Arnim into believing that his southern flank was chiefly threatened. The enemy consequently expended a considerable part of his armour in meeting the 1st Army in the Koursia plain, where the threat to Pont du Fahs was developing.

The 1st Army's drive towards Tebourba was also vigorously opposed, and met with counter-attacks. These preliminary attacks, however, made considerable progress, and the taking of Longstop Hill and Jebel Bou Aoukas, combined with the partial encirclement of Pont du Fahs and the 8th Army's attitude, all tended to convince Von Arnim that Alexander's main effort would be made in the south and that, therefore, he had little to fear in the north.

EVEN when the American 2nd Corps appeared on the northern front, having by a wonderful cross-country march been switched from the extreme right to the extreme left of Alexander's line, it did not excite his suspicions. Possibly underrating the offensive capacity of American troops, he may have thought they had been brought in on what was likely to be a quiet part of the front, and so been all the more convinced that the 1st Army was the immediate danger. Characteristically, and in accordance with German doctrine, he decided to meet that danger by counter-attacking; and it seems probable that he drew on his northern front reserves to provide the striking force he required. With the 8th Army apparently engaged in preparations for renewed attack, it is unlikely that he weakened his force facing it.

During the last week of April Von Arnim delivered his counter-attacks with the greatest ferocity, but they were met with equally fierce resistance and succeeded only in recovering a little lost ground, though this included the recapture of the important key point of Bou Aoukas. By Sunday, May 2, both sides appeared to have fought themselves to exhaustion; but whereas Von Arnim had expended his reserves, Alexander had still strong forces in hand, including those of the 8th Army which was still uncommitted to a major attack. That Alexander switched a considerable part of the 8th Army—the 7th Armoured Division and the 4th Indian Division—to take part in the decisive attack on the 1st Army front, has just been reported.

The enemy having expended his reserves and exhausted his troops in the counter-attacks, Alexander was now in a position to

LAST LAP TO TUNIS. Near Bou Arada on the S. Tunisian front, these men of the 1st Army move up through standing corn preparatory to attacking Axis positions in this area. Furious fighting at Bou Arada in mid-April, 1943, developed into one of the decisive battles for Tunis.
Photo, British Official: Crown Copyright

FINAL PHASE IN TUNISIA. With the occupation of Tunis and Bizerta by the Allies on May 7, 1943 the surviving fragments of Von Arnim's once-great army were hounded into the Cap Bon peninsula. All organised resistance ceased on May 12. This map shows (dotted) the line on April 24, and the direction of subsequent Allied thrusts. *By courtesy of The Times*

make his decisive onslaught. He may have postponed it for a day or so in hopes that the weather, which for a week had been restricting air operations, would improve. At any rate before it was delivered came the unexpected collapse of the northern front.

The Americans, far from having been given a defensive role, had been attacking with great vigour, magnificently assisted on their left by the French Moroccan Corps. They had made considerable progress and captured important key-points with the support of an ever-increasing weight of artillery fire.

LACKING reserves and under the onslaught of troops that had with experience made immense strides in tactical efficiency, the defence wilted. Apparently hoping to escape the grave danger of a sudden collapse, withdrawal to the inner Bizerta defences was ordered. The decision entailed the abandonment of the important road junction of Mateur and the possible complete isolation of the Bizerta fortress. But the decision came too late. At the first signs of retreat, the Americans and Moroccans, without hesitation or delay, started in fierce pursuit ; and the enemy never succeeded in rallying effectively in spite of the strong defences available. Once again it was proved that the strongest works cannot be held by demoralized troops. The capture of Mateur on May 3 also opened a line of approach to the flank of the Axis troops opposing the 1st Army at Tebourba.

Yet this unexpected success was probably not the signal for the decisive 1st Army attack which was by now almost ready for delivery. Preceded on May 5 by a local attack to recover J. Bou Aoukas, the main attack was delivered on the next day. The infantry assault, preceded by a devastating air and artillery bombardment, broke through the weakened crust of the Axis mountain defences and, as at Alamein, opened a gap for the waiting armour to break through into the open country. Delivered on a narrow front and aimed, not as in previous attacks towards Tebourba or Pont du Fahs, but straight at Tunis through Massicault, it was a blitzkrieg attack which in a matter of a few hours disrupted completely the whole German scheme of defence.

But we may ask ourselves, could our infantry have forced the gap for the armour if German reserves had not previously been exhausted and wrongly used ? The village of Massicault, which had been prepared for hedgehog defence, fell without resistance. The counter-attacks which Von Arnim had delivered may have caused a few days' delay, but at the sacrifice of ability to offer prolonged resistance. When the crisis came Von Arnim's reserves were either exhausted or in the wrong place.

Perhaps the most astounding feature in the German collapse was the fall of Bizerta, a fortress designed and equipped to stand a long siege. It is evident that it was no part of the German plan to abandon the place in order to concentrate their whole force for a final stand in the Cape Bon peninsula. Every credit must be given to the Americans and French for the speed and vigour with which they pressed home their attack ; but it is inconceivable that they could have reached the fortress but for the breakdown of German morale, due very largely to the mistakes made by Von Arnim.

NOW that the battle has been won so decisively, we may consider whether after all in the long run it was not to our advantage that the first attempt to seize Tunis and Bizerta failed. It induced Hitler to expend a substantial number of his best troops and to incur immense losses of men, aircraft, and shipping in maintaining them in their dangerous position—and that at a time when all his resources were needed in Russia. The defeat he has suffered is immensely damaging to his prestige, and it has still further undermined belief in German invincibility and military capacity.

Still more important perhaps, the campaign has given the Allied army invaluable experience, and welded it into a magnificent striking force. An easy occupation of Tunisia would have left it far from prepared to undertake the more difficult operations that may be believed to lie ahead.

The six months that have passed since the first landing in Algeria do not therefore represent lost time. As a matter of fact, in any case a considerable part of the time would have been needed to disembark the whole force with its stores, to build up its base establishments, and to complete its organization. Those processes, no doubt, have been expedited under the pressure of the immediate needs of the campaign ; and opportunities have been given to correct faults which might not otherwise have been detected. Now the war in Africa is won. A new phase begins.

AXIS PRISONERS IN TUNIS were rounded up and marched away after our men entered the capital. It was estimated that 50,000 were taken in Northern Tunisia in two days, and very shortly the number was more than trebled. This radioed photo—the first to be received from the captured city—shows some of the great host of the vanquished moving off under the guns of a British tank. *Photo, Planet News*

After Six Months Struggle in the Mountains

Gen. G. S. PATTON watches his men advance during a battle for enemy-held hills in Central Tunisia. Commander of the 2nd U.S. Army Corps, he was succeeded (it was announced on May 9, 1943) by Maj.-Gen Bradley.

Sherman tanks (right) advance towards the Goubellat Plain, between Medjez-el-Bab and Pont du Fahs (see panorama in p. 797).

REMOVING AXIS MINES from the path of the advancing American troops in Central Tunisia. These U.S. Army Engineers are shown clearing one of the innumerable death-traps set by the enemy to impede the Allied push towards Tunis and Bizerta. Having located the mines by their detectors, these specially-trained men remove them by hand. The soldier on the right holds a mine which he has just extracted from its hiding-place in the ground.

Photos, British Official; Crown Copyright, Planet News, Keystone

Eisenhower's Armies Enter Upon the Last Lap

MEDJEZ-EL-BAB was the scene of some of the fiercest fighting on the Northern Tunisian front during the second and third weeks of April 1943. Desperate battles were fought by the 1st Army in the hills N. and N.W. of the town where the enemy was strongly entrenched between Sidi Nsir and Jebel Ahmera (Longstop Hill).

Medjez was originally taken by us on Nov. 25, 1942, and was of great strategic importance. 1st Army men had many savage hand-to-hand encounters with Von Arnim's crack troops during the last offensives. Left, a long column of German prisoners marches through the ruined street of the town en route to a prisoners-of-war camp

Below, a "Priest" 105-mm. gun mounted on a Gen. Grant chassis in action with the 8th Army.

8th ARMY IN ENFIDAVILLE, Tunisian town N. of Sousse, taken by them on April 20, 1943. The men shown above are searching a row of houses for enemy stragglers. Enfidaville was the coastal anchor of the Axis line running west through the mountains. It was here that Rommel launched an unsuccessful counter-attack against Gen. Montgomery's forces as the latter advanced towards the town. When our infantry entered the place they found that the enemy had withdrawn completely.

Photos, British Official: Crown Copyright

Meanwhile, in the northern sector of the Tunisian front the 1st Army were also heavily engaged. On May 3 the capture of Mateur by the U.S. 2nd Corps greatly facilitated further advances. Vital road and railway junction, 20 miles S.W. of Bizerta, Mateur was taken after a 15-mile advance. Above, British troops advance in single file along the Mateur road. Their way lies across a rocky landscape which is characteristic of this region of Northern Tunisia.

The Truth About Britain's Tank-Busters

Recently the phrase "tank-buster" has made frequent appearances in accounts of the fighting in North Africa. This article by HAROLD A. ALBERT explains the term and mentions by name some of the men who have developed the technique of "tank-busting" into a fine art.

TANK-BUSTING — the concentrated and scientific "tin-opening" that punished the Panzers so severely in Tunisia—is not new, although its secret was fully revealed only in the break-through at the Mareth positions. It first hit the enemy between the eyes at Alamein last October. The man behind the punch was a secret ace from India, Wing-Commander Roger Cave Porteous.

Thirty years old, holding a commission for seven years in the R.A.F., he had never been decorated although he had commanded his squadron since its arrival in the Middle East. A brilliant and courageous flyer, he was probably chosen by Air Marshals Tedder and Coningham for his great skill and his distance from the limelight.

Tank-busting as he developed it, in a Hurricane fitted with special heavy-calibre guns for attacking armoured vehicles, was born of dive-bombing and an idea dating from the old R.F.C. days, when planes were fitted with a Heath Robinson device which exploded a charge backwards in order to compensate for the powerful recoil of the guns. The Nazis had come near the idea in the twin-engined Henschel 129, with a 30-mm. cannon slung externally beneath its fuselage. They missed success, perhaps in tactics, perhaps in inferiority of armament. In the hands of Roger Porteous, however, it was clear from the start that we had hit on an innovation of power and supremacy.

The secret lay in the two 40-mm. (about 1·57 in.) Vickers cannon, one beneath each wing. Weighing 320 lb. apiece, too large to go inside the fuselage, they were the biggest weapons ever mounted in single-seater fighters. The shells alone weighed 2½ lb. each and the guns were capable of automatic or single-shot fire.

In the course of nine sorties during the bitter sky-fighting of the Gazala line, Porteous destroyed 5 enemy tanks, 7 lorries and innumerable other vehicles. Encountering two troop carriers on the way home during one trip, he was tempted to try out the combat strength of his unexpected armament, and the carriers were literally shattered to fragments. Soon he was leading in actual training flights over the enemy lines the sweeps that became known as the Porteous school of tank-busting.

SPECIALIZED knowledge—the need for distinguishing at a glance the silhouette of Allied and Axis tanks and armoured cars—could be taught on the ground. The ice-cold technique of low-level precision attacks into enemy armour could be gained only in the sky. Flying skill exceeding the average, plus iron nerves, was essential. The star "pupil," Wing-Commander Howard Burton—who with Squadron-Leader Weston-Burt was to head the great break-through towards Gabes—had won the Sword of Honour at Cranwell. In addition, he had gained the D.F.C. for "coolness" after 50 or 60 sorties had brought him a bag of six enemy aircraft. Another pioneer, South Africa's Captain Johannes Faure, had been mentioned in dispatches as "an exceptionally good leader" and had destroyed at least five enemy planes.

Ace flyers all, the first "tin-openers" were frankly aware of the risks involved. In taking aim, sighting first on a burst of tracer, they might be below the bursts from the Breda guns, but there could be "no room to wriggle," no chance to avoid ground fire, indeed no time for evasive action. The vital essential was pre-arranged teamwork. Spattering the target, the first tank-buster would be closely followed by a second, swerving in sharply from a different direction and confusing the gunners.

That was the primary, simple, but dangerous trick of the Porteous school. Before the enemy knew what it was all about, tank-busters were operating in Libya. Six Italian tanks were caught, sitting in a straight line—and were smashed to pieces. One pilot crippled as many as twenty tanks in less than a week. On the opening day of the Alamein offensive 19 enemy tanks were hit by a single wing. This success foreshadowed the 32 enemy tanks wrecked at El Hamma in April last and the 50 vehicles destroyed and hundreds damaged on the Sfax road, when the further refinement of fighter cover for the Hurriguns enabled tank-busting as a fine art to be almost doubly effective.

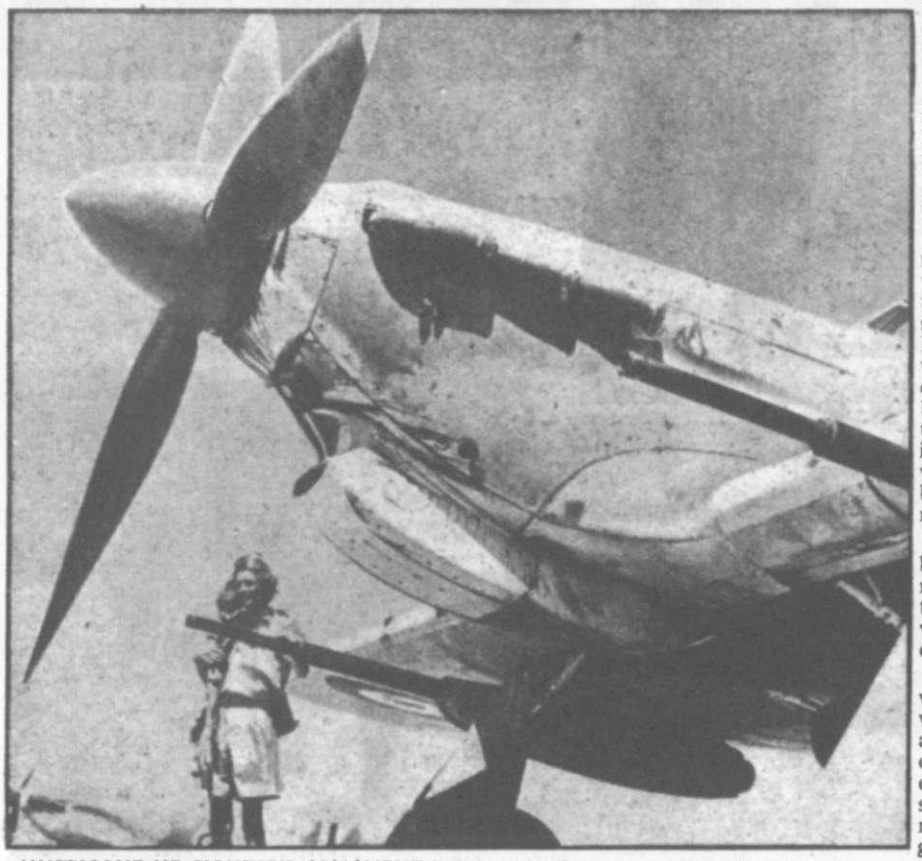
Before long, as the tank-busters swept through to Daba and Fuga, many new men had won their laurels in "double sorties," as they were called. Flying Officer William McRae harvested a D.F.C. for his "fearless determination to achieve success." Sergeant George Chaundy, formerly an Oxford mechanic, Flight Sergeant Kevin Clarke, of Birmingham, and Aberdeen's Sergeant Forbes Fraser—all these flyers of 148 Squadron were conspicuously successful.

IT was never easy. The road to success in this new branch of flying technique was paved with heroism. Thus one of Porteous's right-hand men, Flight-Lieut. Allan Simpson, was wounded in the chest by ground fire as he swept into the armour clusters at Bir Hacheim. Still he continued to attack, scoring one hit after another. Then, weakened by loss of blood and with his right arm useless, he attempted to gain height. His plane was hit by the barrage. Hot oil spraying his face, blinded by smoke, Simpson parachuted at only 500 feet. The citation to his D.F.C. justifiably described this deed of gallantry as "an outstanding devotion to duty."

Then there was Sergeant John Price, formerly a Yorkshire electrician, who was wounded in the head by a shell splinter and, though dazed and suffering from concussion, still carried on. There was Lieutenant Douglas Rogan, who had his right foot virtually shot off during an attack on a tank concentration, but still brought his plane back to base—an amazing effort in face of the pain and shock—and made a good landing. And there was Sergeant John Strain, who had an artery punctured and was nearly blown off his machine by a burst of flak but remained undaunted . . .

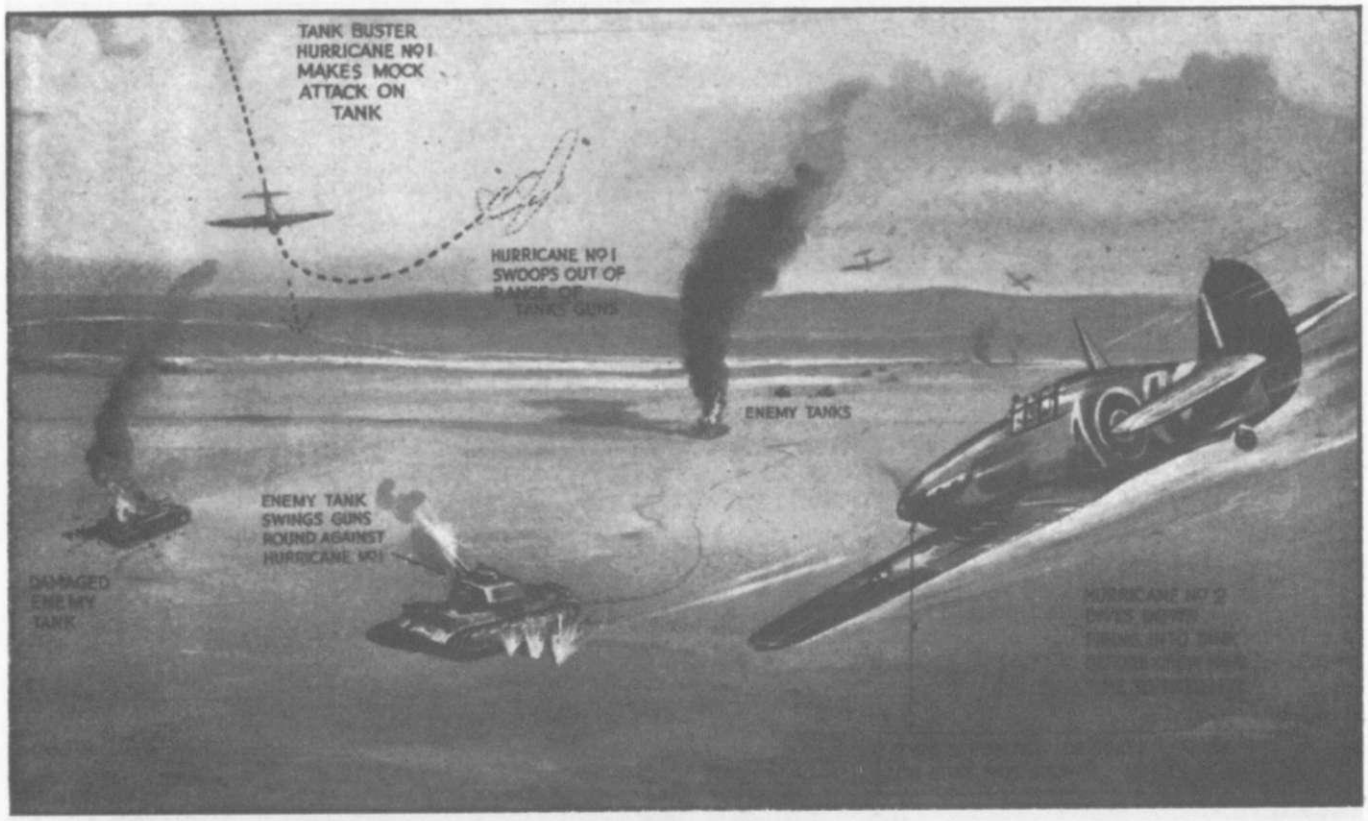
These are a few among the many tank-busting founder members. Today they and many newcomers to the business have spread their work from auxiliary attacks on armoured vehicles to dug-in emplacements and ground offensive formations of all kinds.

Rommel undoubtedly planned a surprise with his Mark IVs and Vs at Mareth. They were dug into pits in the sides of the wadis, and only tank-busting tactics could have opened them up. That scores of tanks were destroyed and hundreds damaged without—in some instances—a chance to fire a shot is now a matter of history. In General Montgomery's phrase, such intimate and close support between air and army had never been achieved before. It was an inspiration to all the troops—and a surpassing sign of Hurrigun victories yet to come.



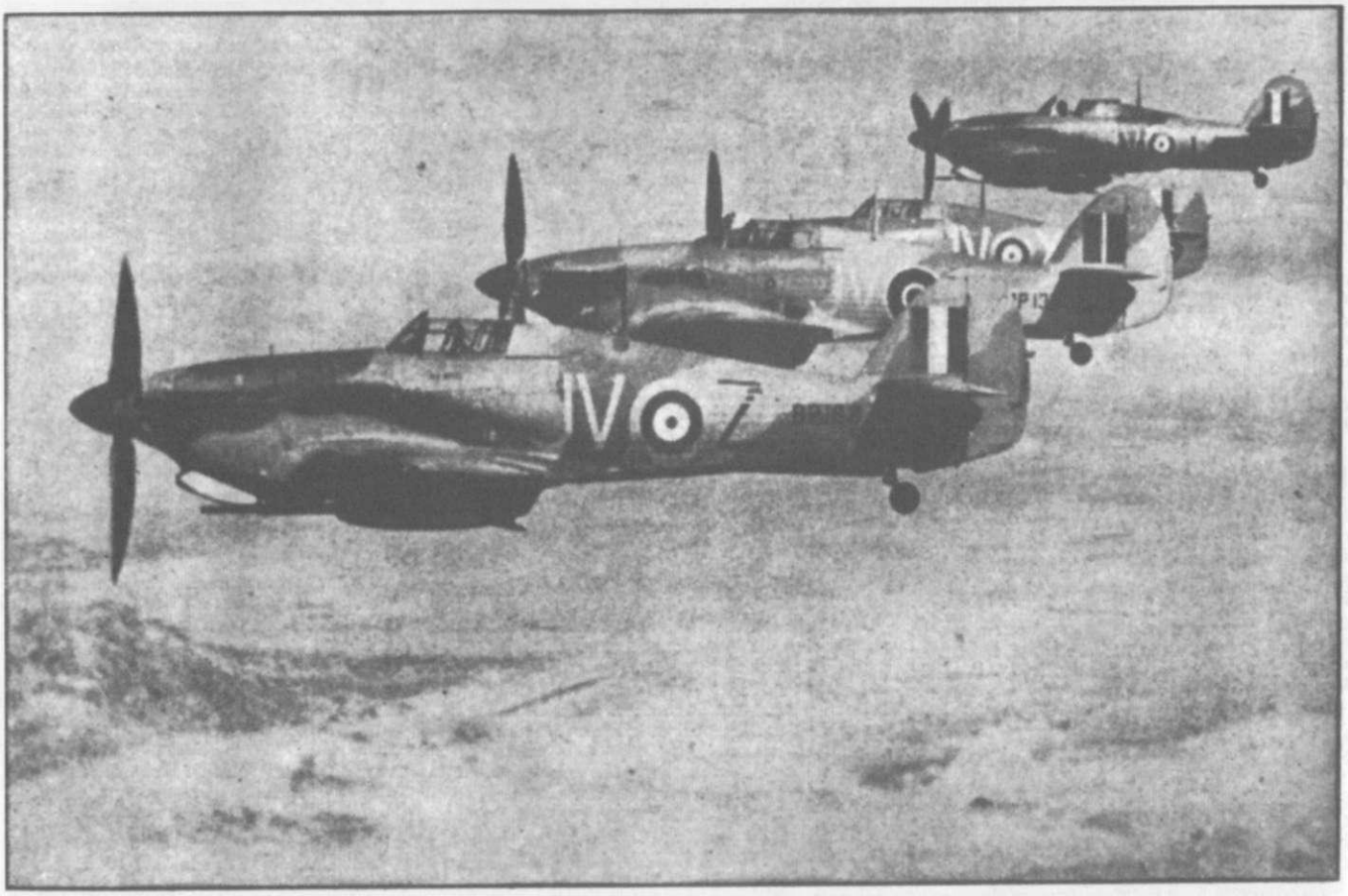
HURRICANE IID FIGHTER'S ARMAMENT includes two 40-mm. guns. Fitted under the wings, each gun fires a 2½-lb. shell and is capable of automatic or single-shot fire. This photograph shows the formidable armament of one of these specialized aircraft which have played so successful a part in attacks on enemy tanks and armoured fighting vehicles in N. Africa. (See also p. 775).
Photo, British Official: Crown Copyright

How the R.A.F. Deals with the Nazi Armour


TANK BUSTER HURRICANE NO 1 MAKES MOCK ATTACK ON TANK
HURRICANE NO 1 SWOOPS OUT OF RANGE OF TANKS' GUNS
ENEMY TANKS
ENEMY TANK SWINGS GUNS ROUND AGAINST HURRICANE NO 1
DAMAGED ENEMY TANK
HURRICANE NO 2

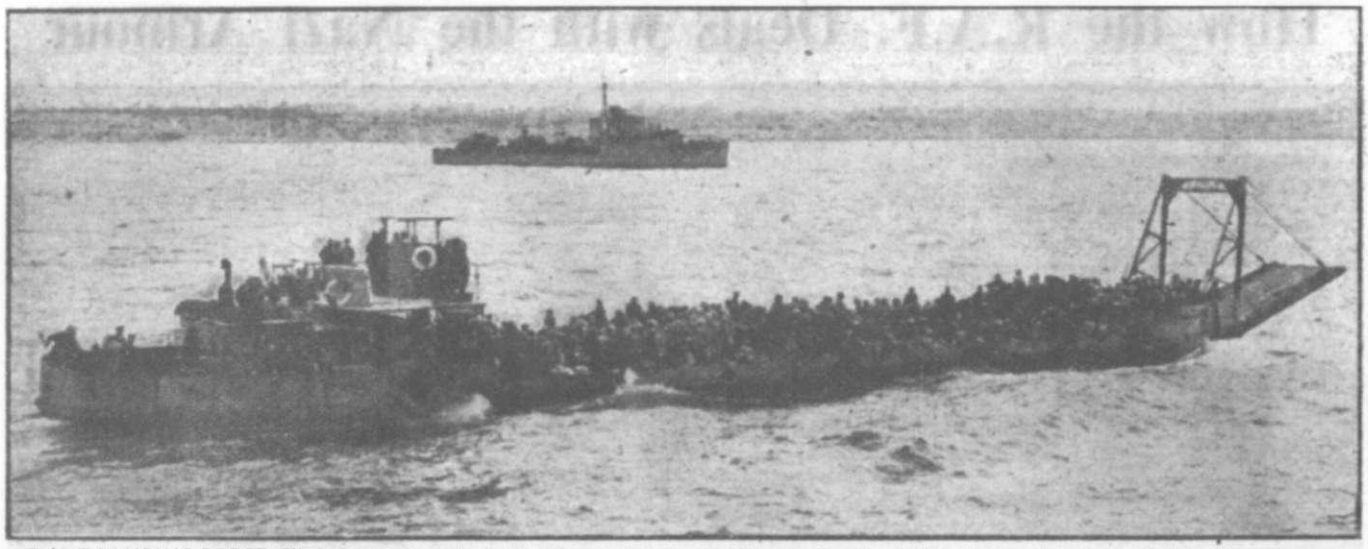
DUAL ATTACK BY R.A.F. 'TIN OPENERS' IN TUNISIA. This drawing gives a vivid impression of the tactics employed by our Hurricanes when carrying out their paralysing assaults on enemy tanks. By working in pairs and coming in from different directions, they make it impossible for the tank under attack to follow the movements of both aircraft with its turret, and it is thus apt to fall a victim to the 'tank-busters' when unsupported by other fighting vehicles. (See article opposite.)

Drawing by courtesy of The Sphere



'TANK-BUSTERS' IN FLIGHT. Each of the 40 mm. guns carried by these aircraft weighs only 320 lb., and in addition to the cannon the Hurricane is armed with two ·303 Browning machine-guns. These machines first went into action against Rommel's armoured vehicles in Cyrenaica in June 1942. During the following month one squadron alone accounted for 74 tanks, 46 lorries, eight armoured cars, four six-wheeled troop carriers and three bowsers—all for the loss of one pilot.

Photo, British Official; Crown Copyright



GIANT LANDING BARGE, filled to capacity with troops who are standing shoulder to shoulder, is here shown doing ferry duty in the harbour at Tripoli. Italian apprehensions of an Allied invasion deepened considerably as the Axis suffered defeat after defeat in Tunisia. Landing-craft, such as that seen above, might well be employed one day in taking troops and equipment across the Mediterranean. *Photo, Associated Press*

THE WAR AT SEA

by **Francis E. McMurtrie**

ONE of the direct consequences of the fall of Bizerta will be the facility afforded the British Mediterranean Fleet for making use of that port as a base. Any damage done to the harbour installations can hardly affect this fact.

Since the French occupied Tunisia in 1881, Bizerta has been systematically developed as a naval base, for which it is naturally well adapted. At Bizerta itself is the commercial port and outer harbour; this is connected by a dredged channel, having a uniform depth of water of 39 feet, with Bizerta Lake. Here are situated the naval dockyard and the town of Ferryville. There are four dry docks, of which the largest, 800 feet in length, could take a battleship or aircraft-carrier. Two others, each 656 feet long, are able to accommodate cruisers. The remaining one, 295 feet in length, is suitable for small destroyers, sloops or corvettes.

In the lake, which is eight miles across and roughly circular, there is room for a whole fleet. Its obvious weakness is that ships sunk in the dredged channel might insert the cork in the bottle, as it were; but if this were done by the Germans before surrendering, the obstacle should not take long to remove, judging from the rapidity with which Benghazi and Tripoli harbours were cleared.

DRY docks cannot be destroyed, though the pumping plant by which they are either flooded or emptied might be wrecked. Heavy cranes and other mechanism may have been sabotaged; but it may be assumed that the possibility of such obstacles having been left will have been foreseen, and that every possible arrangement will have been made in advance for putting in hand the necessary repairs as soon as the port is taken over by the Allied naval authorities.

Strategically, Bizerta is admirably situated for launching an attack upon Sicily or Sardinia, distant respectively some 90 and 125 miles. In the lake there is ample space for transports and landing-craft to assemble—though for that matter there are several hundred feet of quayage in the outer port from which troops could be embarked.

Interference by Axis aircraft from the other side of the Sicilian Channel should not be serious so long as we maintain our present superiority in the air. Actually, that advantage should tend to increase as time goes on, so that the passage of supplies through the Mediterranean to Egypt and Syria should soon be possible. This will obviate the long delay hitherto involved by the necessity of employing the route round the Cape of Good Hope. It was estimated some time ago by Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew Cunningham that this shortening of our sea supply route would be equivalent to an addition of 2,000,000 tons to Allied shipping resources. This implies a corresponding gain in the unceasing battle against the U-boats.

WHAT Could Italy's Navy Do in the Event of Invasion?

In some quarters it has been predicted that the Germans will now seek to concentrate the greater part of their submarine strength in the Mediterranean, with the object of obstructing any invasion of Europe from Africa. This rather loses sight of the fact that similar efforts to interfere with seaborne supplies to our armies in North Africa failed to prevent their annihilating Arnim's forces. That being the case, what chance have German submarines of accomplishing anything appreciable, now that the whole of the southern shores of the Mediterranean are under Allied control?

It is far more likely that the Germans will leave the unenviable task of meeting the menace of invasion from Africa to their wretched dupes, the Italians. In view of the consistent failure of the latter to accomplish anything at sea in the past, it may be questioned whether such opposition need be reckoned formidable.

At the same time, an examination of Italian naval strength may be of interest. It comprises seven battleships, the majority of which were last reported to be at Spezia, in Northern Italy. A report that three of these ships had proceeded to Taranto, in the south, is a little difficult to credit. Not only is it obviously bad strategy to divide forces in this way, but the disaster of November 8, 1940, when the Italian fleet at Taranto was crippled by a torpedo attack from British naval aircraft, proved that port to be no longer a safe one.

How many cruisers Italy has in service is uncertain. Not more than two, and probably only one, of the heavy 10,000-ton type have survived the hazards of war. There may be seven or eight of between 5,000 and 8,000 tons; and in addition, several of the twelve new fast ships of the Regolo class, of 3,362 tons, are believed to have been completed. One of them was torpedoed and probably destroyed by a British submarine not long ago.

When the War began the Italian Navy possessed a strong force of destroyers and seagoing torpedo-boats, but losses in these classes have been very heavy. In the three weeks preceding the fall of Bizerta and Tunis at least eight were disposed of by the Royal Navy and Allied air forces. It is questionable if more than 60 could be mustered to meet an invasion threat, so many having been uselessly expended in escorting Axis convoys to Africa.

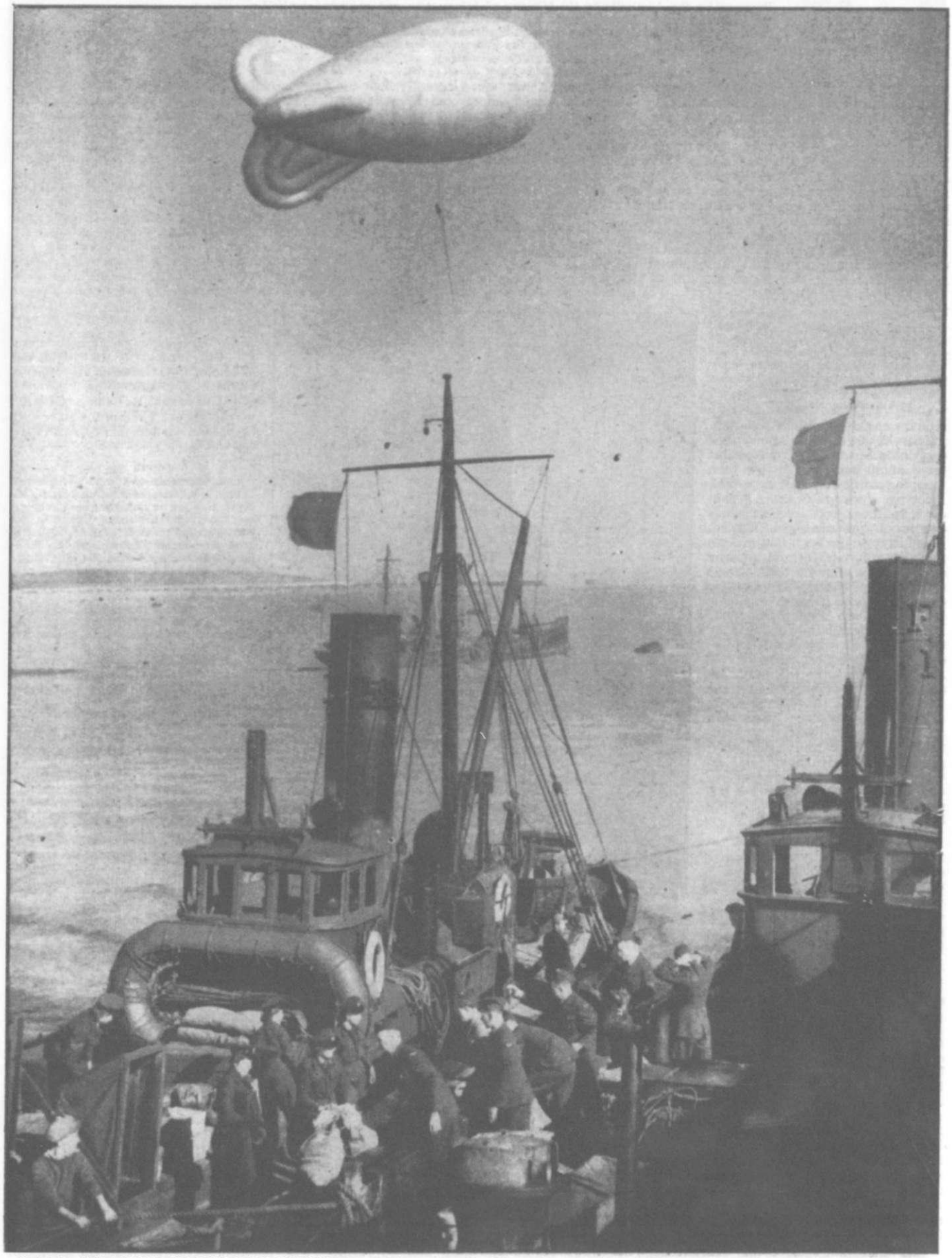
There are, of course, the small craft which we should class as motor torpedo-boats and motor gunboats, but which the Italians refer to as M.A.S.—an abbreviation for *motoscafi anti-sommergibili*, or anti-submarine launches. They were extremely proud of these little craft in pre-War days, boasting that they would accomplish marvels in the way of torpedoing enemy warships. In practice they have proved a sad disappointment, even though the greatest bravery was shown by Italian officers in abortive attacks on the harbours of Alexandria, Malta, and Gibraltar. How many of them still remain at the enemy's disposal it is impossible to say, as they can be built very rapidly—possibly a hundred.

ITALIAN submarines numbered over 100 when war began, but losses have probably reduced this figure by at least half. Some of the larger ones are believed still to be operating outside the Mediterranean, in conjunction with the U-boat packs; but there should remain available a considerable number which would have to be reckoned with when attempting a landing on Italian soil.

For submarine operations, however, the Mediterranean is not an ideal sea, as the water is unusually clear and the weather is often bright. At this time of year, too, the hours of daylight are so many that an additional handicap is imposed. In such circumstances the remarkable achievements of our own submarines are more than ever to be commended; but up to now the Italians have not shown themselves to be capable of such feats.

It would seem, therefore, that any serious naval resistance to an Allied invasion of Europe from Africa is scarcely to be feared. Should the Italians at last take their courage in their hands and send their entire fleet out to do or die, no one (we may be sure) would welcome the decision more warmly than Sir Andrew Cunningham.

Air Force Girls Lend a Hand with the Sea Balloons



W.A.A.F. PERSONNEL IN BALLOON COMMAND are doing a front-line job. These airwomen help to keep our sea balloons aloft, for among their many important tasks they service the barges and drifters of our water-borne barrage. Daily rations for the men aboard the barges have to be weighed and checked, and then the ration-vessel sets out for the balloon boats. W.A.A.F.s are here seen loading ration-containers on to a drifter of the sea balloon fleet. *Photo, Keystone*

Gentlemen, a Toast: The Charwomen of the Sea!

Prepared for the Admiralty by the Ministry of Information and published by H.M. Stationery Office, His Majesty's Minesweepers is a well-illustrated ninepenny booklet describing the work of that great fleet of little ships which clear the seaways of the deadly "fish" strewn with such indiscriminate devilry by enemy planes and ships.

CHARWOMEN of the sea: it is a well-chosen description. In every town and city those hard-working women, the "chars," are "up with the dawn, sweeping and clearing passage and office before their betters are abroad. Most people take their work for granted. Few know how they live; few even see them, save perhaps for a glimpse of one adjusting her bonnet as she departs. They are sturdy, weather-beaten and good-humoured. Rain, hail or snow finds them at their task; and when there is a blitz they take it with a jest." To continue the quotation from the official account of His Majesty's Minesweepers:

Like them, the minesweepers are as undeterred by blizzards as by bombs, and they have a spirit and tradition of their own. They are seen by few outside their own calling, for by the time the big ships are due their sweeping is done, their gear packed, and they are under steam for home.

Over twenty-five thousand men are now engaged in the Minesweeping Service of the Royal Navy, and every month new ships go from the yards to join those which have been sweeping since the War began. Fleet sweepers and trawlers, paddlers, motor-minesweepers, whalers and drifters have been and are engaged in continuous sweeps, making the channels safe for the convoys and the ships of war. Most people seem to think that minesweeping is confined to the English Channel, but in fact these handy men of the Navy have cleared up many a minefield in the Mediterranean, off the coasts of Africa, in the waters of Australasia, in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. In Arctic waters, too, they have provided a safe passage for the convoys proceeding to Murmansk. It is impossible to calculate the value of their service; they have caught and detonated thousands of mines, any one of which might have blown a ship to pieces. Every minefield cleared is a battle won.

Headquarters of the Minesweeping Service is H.M.S. Vernon, which came into prominence when (as is fully told in the book under review) Lt.-Cmdr. Ouvry and other members of its staff solved the dangerous puzzle of that "scientist's paradise," the German magnetic mine.

IN this war as in the last trawlers are the mainstay of the Minesweeping Service. At scores of ports round the British coast they may be seen, lying three or four abreast alongside the quay, steaming out to their sweeping grounds, or returning to port after a stiff spell of duty. They are seaworthy little vessels of steel construction with high bows, with a length of about 140 ft. and a displacement of between 200 and 300 tons. At sea they are just numbers, but in harbour they display their names in white letters on a black board. Many of them have their distinctive badges; many have a swastika painted on their funnel, indicating a Nazi plane brought down, while the tally of mines destroyed is kept by chevrons and stars. H.M.T. Rolls Royce holds the record at present of over 150 mines to her credit.

The larger and faster of the minesweepers operate with the Fleet; and their increased armament enables them to undertake escort and anti-submarine duties when they are not actually sweeping. Recently one of them rammed and destroyed a German submarine in Arctic waters, and when H.M.S. Edinburgh was torpedoed in May 1942 three of the Halcyons—a type of Fleet sweeper, having a displacement of some 800 tons, a complement of 80, and a speed of 17 knots—put up a spirited fight which will live in the history of the Service.

The Flag Officer in command had given orders that they should retire at full speed under a smoke screen if attacked by surface-craft. These orders never reached them. When the Edinburgh was hit, instead of turning away they turned towards the enemy destroyers, "going in like three young terriers," as the Admiral said, and firing whenever visibility permitted. Then, while one made a smoke screen, the other two went alongside the sinking cruiser and took off the whole ship's company. The Admiral was among the last to leave. As he stepped on to the sweeper's quarter-deck her Commanding Officer saluted.

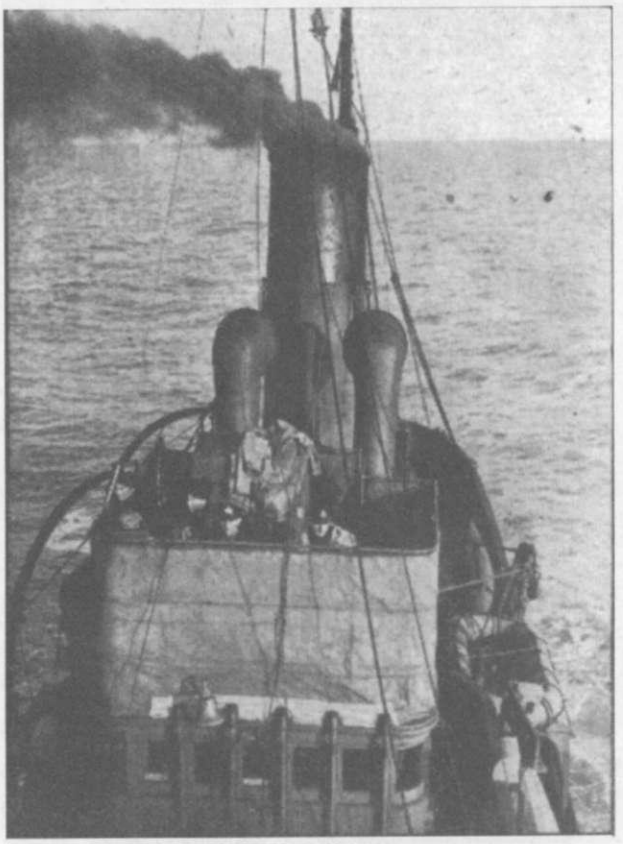
"Everything correct, sir. Your flag is hoisted."

The Admiral looked upwards. Flying at the masthead was the Cross of St. George, with two red balls in the upper and lower cantons. Its ragged edge suggested that it was a Senior Officer's pendant from which the tails had been cut, and the red balls looked as though they had been hastily daubed on with red paint. But there was no mistaking it for anything but a Rear-Admiral's flag.

It was a gesture which no German could hope to understand: but one that Nelson himself would have appreciated.

These Halcyons, it may be mentioned, are mostly named after minesweepers of 1914; Halcyon herself was built under the 1931 Naval estimates, and 16 further ships of the same class were added in later years. One of them, Seagull, was the first rivetless ship built for the Royal Navy, her construction being entirely welded. Then there is the Bangor class of 20 or more ships, which have a displacement of about 700 tons, and a main armament of a 3-inch gun forward and a pom-pom aft; their complement is about 80.

Yet a third class of Fleet minesweepers is the Albury, consisting of 20 ships built under the emergency programme of the last war, and launched between June 1917 and August 1919. Their displacement is 710 tons, and their speed 16 knots. They have a complement of 73, and are armed with a 4-inch gun apiece. They are the only coal-burners left in the Royal Navy: hence their nickname of "Smoky Joes."



FIGHTING AN UNSEEN ENEMY lurking under the surface of the sea, men aboard our minesweepers carry out their hazardous tasks by day and night. These officers maintain a keen vigil from the bridge of their sweeper. *Photo, Planet News*

IN the annals of minesweeping "Operation Dynamo" stands out as one of the most amazing achievements of the little ships. "Operation Dynamo" was the evacuation of Dunkirk. The Smoky Joes were there, the paddle-sweepers and the drifters.

The senior ship of the paddle-sweeper flotilla, the Sandown (Commander K. M. Greig, R.N.), was bombed repeatedly on every passage across the Channel, but was never hit; her ratings ascribed her good fortune to their mascot, a dachshund who became known as Bombproof Bella. But two other ships of the flotilla were not so fortunate. The Gracie Fields sank on her second trip, and the Brighton Queen sank after striking a wreck on her first return passage. As she went down the fourth ship of the flotilla, the Medway Queen (Lt. A. T. Cook, R.N.R.), took off all the survivors. The Medway Queen made seven trips to and from Dunkirk, so setting up the sweepers' record.

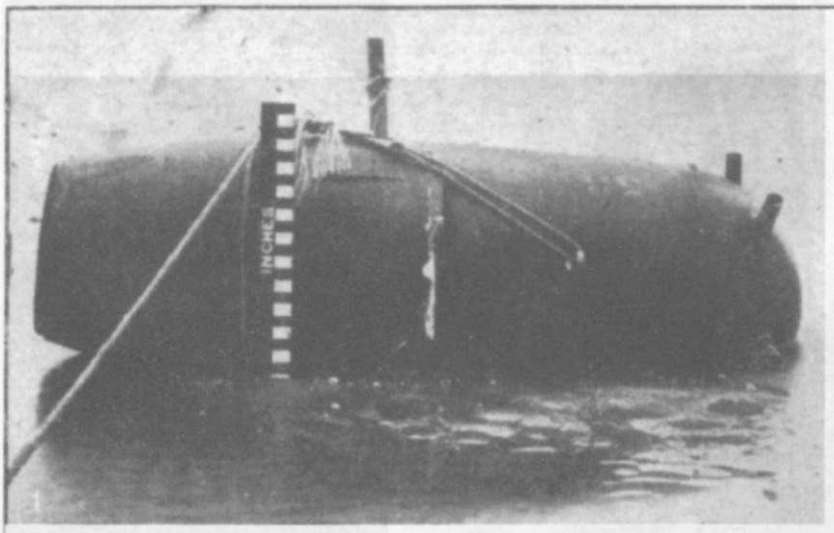
Of another flotilla of paddle-sweepers that reached Dunkirk from Harwich, the Waverley (Lt. S. F. Harmer-Elliott, R.N.V.R.) had embarked 600 troops when twelve Heinkels bombed her from a height of 8,000 ft. A bomb passed straight through the ship, and within a minute of the order "Abandon ship" the Waverley had gone down. Lt. Harmer-Elliott was rescued after being 45 minutes in the water, but many of his ship's company perished, together with between 300 and 400 of the soldiers. The other ships of the flotilla, Marmion, Duchess of Fife, and Oriole, were more fortunate, doing magnificent work in the evacuation. For four days and nights their men worked without sleep, almost without food, and between them they brought 4,755 troops safely home.

Finally, mention is made of H.M.T. St. Melanté (Skipper F. Hayward).

When the Germans invaded Holland she was sweeping off The Hook, and the skipper and several members of the crew were wounded by bomb splinters. Then she went to Flushing, where with her consort the Arctic Hunter she was bombed and raked by machine-gun fire. After sweeping the harbour entrance at Zeebrugge, St. Melanté went in turn to Dunkirk, Le Havre, and St. Nazaire. From St. Nazaire she took off 670 men and carried them safely to the transports waiting in the harbour. She was there when the Lancastria went down. Then as the troop-ships were ready to sail Skipper Hayward was told, "Although your crew are off their feet, you must sweep us out."

So at dawn the St. Melanté and the trawler Asama went ahead of the great convoy—twenty merchant-ships packed with troops with ten fishing trawlers and the escort of destroyers. They swept from the lock gates into the open sea; then on either side of the convoy steamed with it to Britain.

Hitler's 'Secret Weapon' Was Met and Mastered



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FREEING THE SEA TRAFFIC LANES. 1, This German magnetic mine—Hitler's secret weapon—dropped in the Thames Estuary on Nov. 23, 1939, was the first to be recovered intact. 2, "Bosun's Nightmare," so-called because of its tangles, was the first answer to the magnetic mine. 3, M's denote magnetic mines destroyed, and strokes seapaths cleared. 4, "To hell with Hitler," is Minesweeper Stella Rigel's motto. 5, This sweeper makes for home after being badly damaged by a mine.

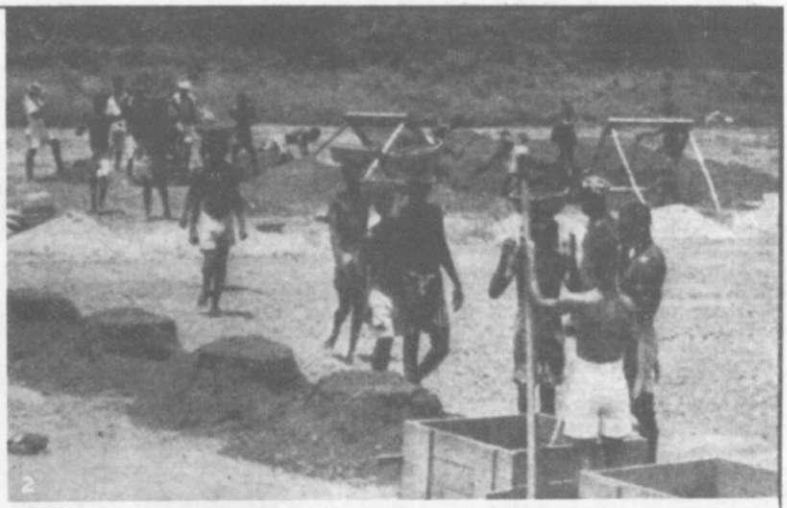
Photos from His Majesty's Minesweepers

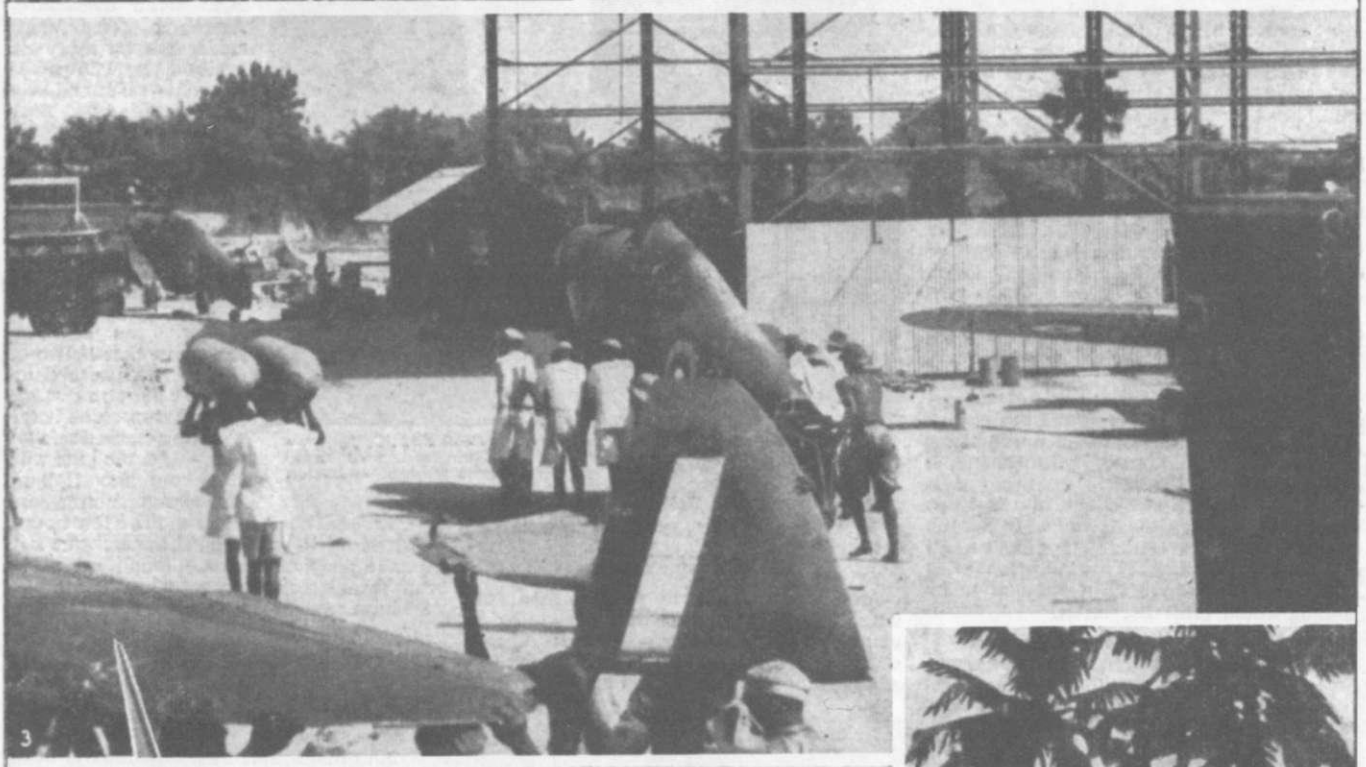
Heroic Figures in Britain's Submarine Service

MEN AND SHIPS ON OUR UNDERWATER FRONT: 1, Lt. J. S. Stevens, described by Gen. Eisenhower as "the maddest captain in the trade," has been awarded the D.S.O. He served in the Thunderbolt—previously Thetis—when she sank a U-boat on her first patrol, and was later appointed command to another submarine. On April 21, 1943 the Thunderbolt's loss was announced. 2, H.M. Submarine Ursula has a long and distinguished war record, dating from her daring raid on Nazi warships in the R. Elbe in 1939. Here she flies the Jolly Roger recording her tally of victims. Bars represent supply ships sunk, the oil installations, viaducts and trains denote shore bombardments, while the stars indicate gun actions. 3, Cmdr. J. W. Linton, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N., who, it was announced on May 3, 1943, was lost with his ship Turbulent. He was estimated to have sunk some 27 enemy vessels. 4, "Torpedo running, sir!" is telephoned to the captain in the control-room. 5, Gun action aboard a British submarine. 6, End of the patrol; a submarine enters port.

Photos, British Official: Crown-Copyright

This Way for the Air Route Across Africa!





ON THE BRITISH W. AFRICAN COAST is the airfield pictured above, a vital link in the supply of aircraft to the African front and Middle East. Here, crated machines, shipped from Britain, are unpacked, assembled and tested before being flown across Africa by pilots who will later use them for Operations. The creation of an airfield from a tropical forest was a formidable task. 1, Palm tree falls to native workers' axes. 2, In building runways "metalling" was carried in baskets on the heads of labourers. 3, Hurricane fuselages, wings and tail units being taken from crates for assembly. Two native porters on the left are carrying on their heads long-range petrol tanks to be fitted under fighters' wings. 4, Hurricanes ready for flight-testing before being handed over to pilots who will then fly them to their destination. 5, Hawker Hurricane on flight-test after assembly on the tropic aerodrome.

Photos, British Official: Crown Copyright

Women Make Good as Aircraft Surgeons

That the duties performed by the women in the Services are many and varied, and often highly responsible, will be clear from what we have said about them in our pages. And here W. J. BENTLEY writes of yet another job which feminine brains and hands have learnt to do —and learnt to do well.

Now it can be revealed that on many R.A.F. stations—where pilots train for daylight sweeps and mass raids, on Master I and III trainers—nearly 80 per cent of the flight mechanics are women. They're the girls who nurse the planes, and Waafs in the servicing parties—a special branch of flight mechanic, which is a Group II trade, the second highest group of skilled tradesmen and tradeswomen to be found in the entire Royal Air Force.

Each aircraft is inspected every 24 hours, and thoroughly overhauled after it has flown a stipulated time. In the 24-hour inspection of the Masters the girls check up on the filling of the oil, fuel and supercharged oil tanks, check over the controls and run the engines on the ground, just as the men do, before signing certificates of airworthiness. At some stations a special mixed team, of men and women, is responsible for the airworthiness of each individual machine; at Master training centres all take a share and have a joint responsibility for all aircraft.

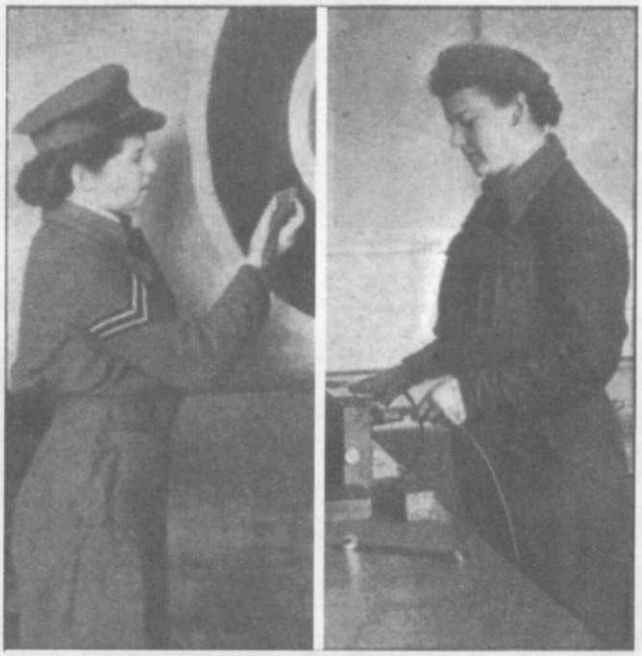
"Like the men of our group," a girl flight mechanic says, "we are divided into 'flight mechanics A,' who do the routine inspections and maintenance of air-frames and undercarriages, and 'flight mechanics E,' who are responsible for inspection, starting and running of aero-motors." When girls first arrived at one station a few months ago the men did all the work, but the girls have now taken over an equal and independent share under the N.C.O. gang-leaders.

On that station the other day I saw a girl fitting a new filter to a Pratt and Whitney Twin Wasp motor, while another was fitting new plugs—a very different job from changing the plugs of a family car! Another girl at work on the Kestrel motor of a Master I was fitting new H.T. leads, while two girls together were shortening the jack on an undercarriage leg because the mechanism was not locking properly. Their job had to be done with the utmost care, for a crash-landing would otherwise result.

Official opinion has been against the use of girl flight mechanics on operational stations, as it was felt they would not be able to stand the irregular hours. Few of the girls knew anything about engineering in "civvy street." One I met had been a dressmaker, another a housekeeper; one a shop assistant, another an armament inspector. As recruits they were given a psychology test before beginning the course of training; and though they do not have to fly on Operations, they nevertheless do have to fly on occasion.

All R.A.F. flight mechanics, men and women, must expect to fly in aircraft for which they have signed certificates of airworthiness. The flying instructors of the stations take them up and can explain to them anything slightly awry in the performance of the machine better than they could do on the ground.

There's a team of flight mechanic "A" girls fixing on their parachute harness now before going up. They wear flying helmets and seat-type parachutes are attached over their blue overalls.



TWO W.A.A.F. CORPORALS, E. Chapman (left) and K. Donovan (right), sparking-plug testers of Coastal Command, flew some hundreds of miles recently to complete urgent work in connexion with the servicing of aircraft in the North.
Photos, British Official: Crown Copyright

Air-screws of the planes are swung by girls, others hang on to the tails to keep them down, and girls, too, remove the chocks in professional manner.

The spirit of these ground crews is perfect. They get little glory, but they love the job with a craftsman's pride in it. And at an engineering centre not far away are other girls who make the mass raids and day sorties a success. They are the girls of a Spitfire hospital who "nurse" broken planes. At one of these centres 150 girls—ex-domestic servants, clerks and housewives—have become skilled nurses for damaged fighter aircraft.

When you hear on the radio that "two of our fighters were damaged," or that "the pilot, his machine badly shot-up, returned safely"—these are the girls who bring the aircraft back into commission again, often within a few hours.

All the girls working on this scheme are expert aircraft surgeons, though none has been at the factory more than 10 months, working on a scheme suggested to the Ministry of Aircraft Production by Lord Nuffield. They work so swiftly that a "fly-in"—a machine badly shot-up but capable of being flown—is usually in the air again on Operations in a matter of hours.

W.A.A.F. FLIGHT MECHANICS are doing splendid work for the R.A.F. in Flying Training Command. The safety of our pilots depends to a considerable extent upon the skill and care of these airwomen. They check the filling of fuel and oil tanks, etc., and finally they fly with the pilot to test the machine which they have serviced. Here some of them are hard at work on a trainer.
Photo, British Official: Crown Copyright

Sometimes the machines are "ferried" in, but often a Spit or a Hurribox is flown in from its squadron by the pilot himself. "That's why we can feel we really are helping the pilots," one of the girls explained, as she looked up from a riveting job in the cockpit of a Spitfire Vb. "When the boys come in here and tell us how they escaped with their lives after getting over the target, and so getting badly shot-up, it's all the incentive we need to get those planes back into action again as quickly as possible."

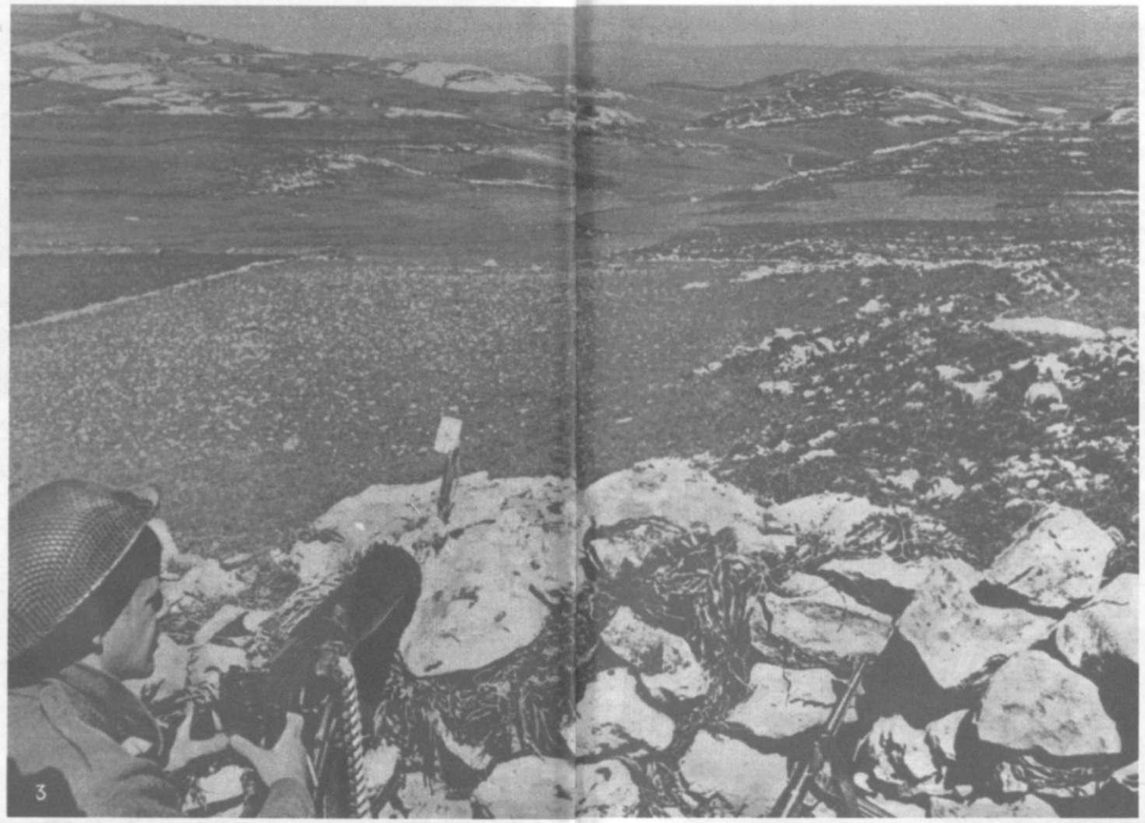
As each girl finishes her job it is wheeled outside, and an R.A.F. test-pilot takes it up for fault-finding. Cynics might think that he risks his neck by having to fly once-damaged aircraft that have been mended by women.

But there is striking proof how well these girls keep the Spits and Hurriboxes in the air. You see, as the test-pilot taxies in he sees a slim girl standing at the far end of the field. She is easily identifiable in her white linen suit. She is the checker. In her book have to go details of all the defects spotted by the test-pilot, and which must be put right before the machine is flown back to the Operational station. In her book there are barely four pages of complaints in the course of the whole ten months. That's proof.

Photo, British Official: Crown Copyright

He Led the Victors of North Africa

Second to America's General Eisenhower in command of the armies of the United Nations in the Mediterranean basin, General the Hon. Sir Harold Alexander served in France for the greater part of the last war, receiving the D.S.O., M.C., and the Legion of Honour. In this War he was in command of the last British forces at Dunkirk, and won deserved renown for his masterly leadership in Burma two years later. Then as C.-in-C. Middle East he launched at El Alamein the great series of victories which was crowned on May 7, 1943 by the Allies' triumphal entry into Tunis and Bizerta.



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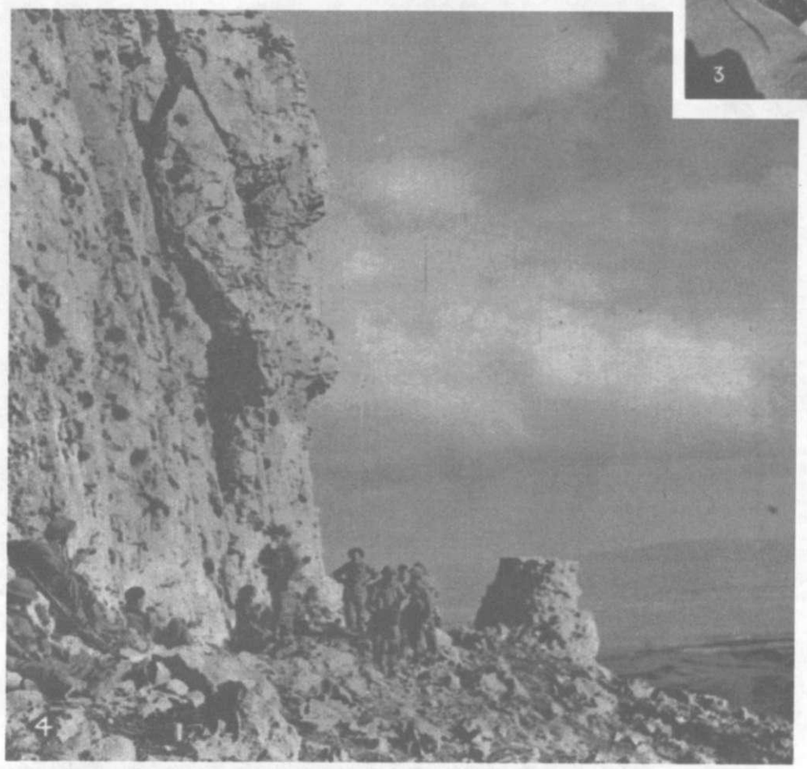
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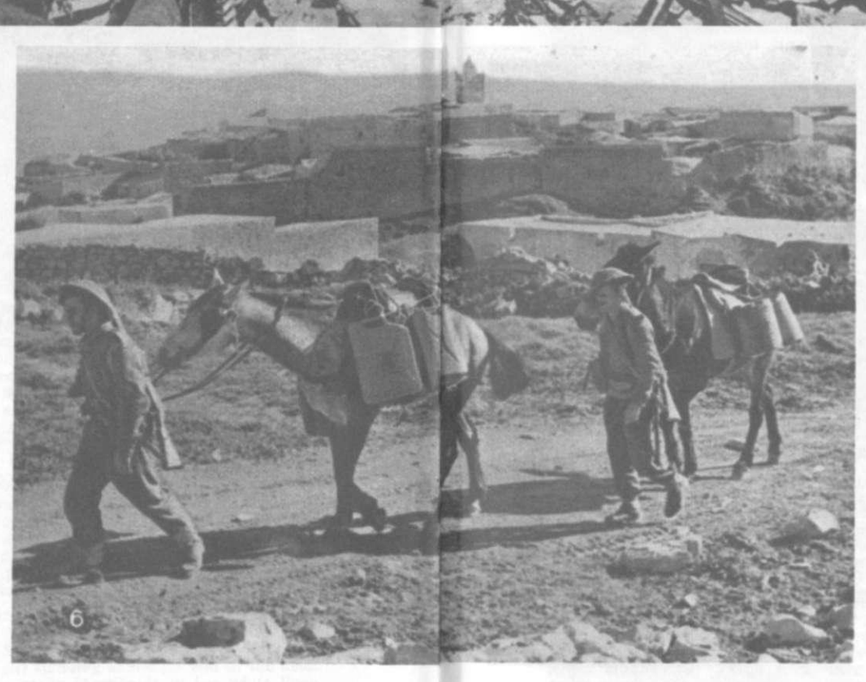
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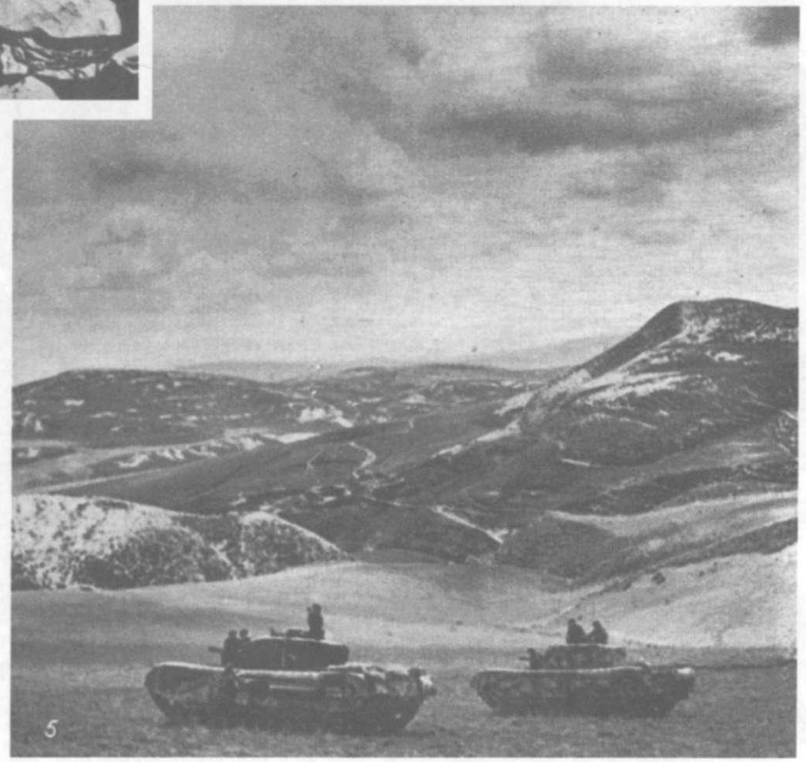
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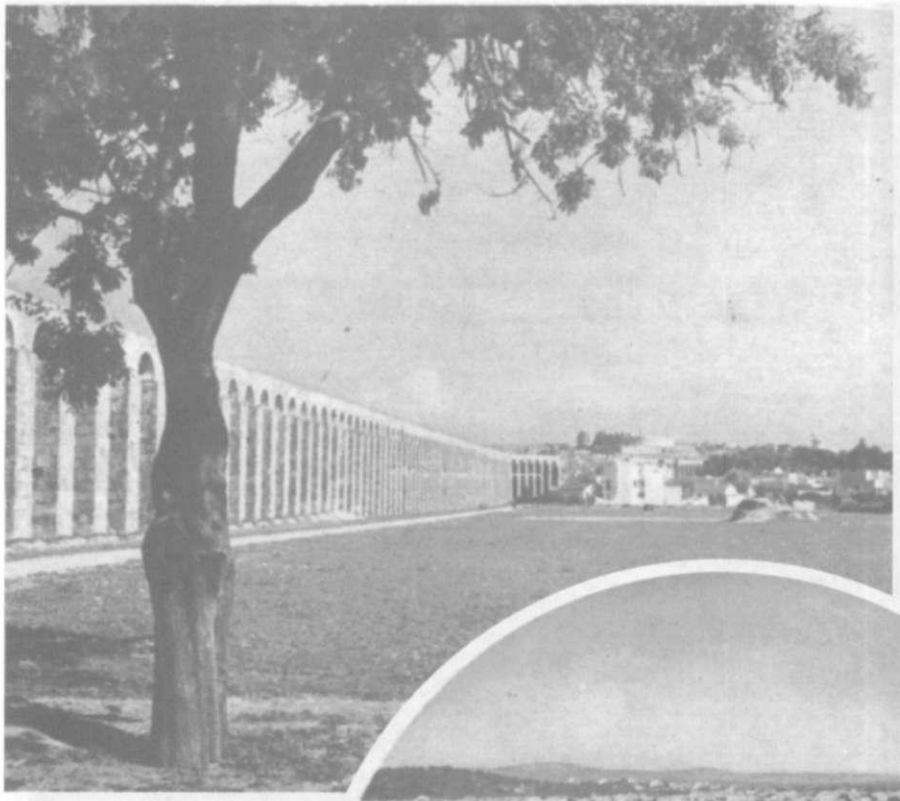
Nature Aided the Nazis in Tunisia

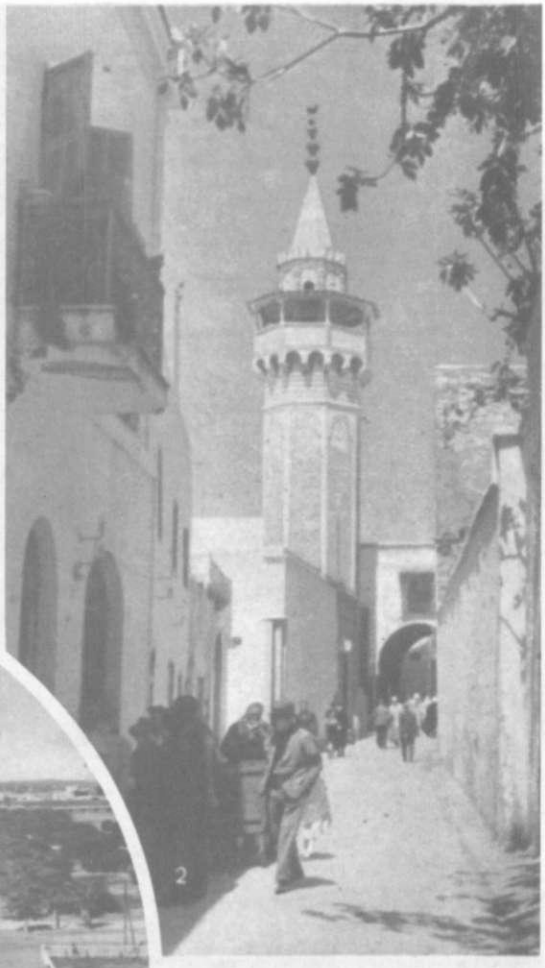
Through April and into May the great battle of the Tunisian "box" went on, as Von Arnim strove desperately to avoid being thrown into the sea. To the uninitiated the Allies' progress seemed disappointingly slow, but these photographs show a countryside most admirably suited for defence by a determined adversary. 1, American M-10 tank destroyers, a new Ford product representing an improvement on the M-4 medium tank, rolling through an Arab farm; 2, German 60-ton Tiger tanks, knocked out by gunners of the 1st Army, litter a Tunisian battlefield. Yet they were "invincible"!

Photos, Brit. Official: Crown Copyr.; Keystone

Hard Was the Way Up Longstop

Barren mountain slopes, crags and precipitous gorges, forbidding heights towering above the plain—these are the main characteristics of the rocky wilderness whose conquest has demanded such a toll of human life and labour. Desolate appears the landscape seen by this machine-gunner perched above Heidous (3); but on Longstop Hill, the black ridge in the middle distance, the enemy lies ensconced. A craggy crest above Kelbine just captured by our men (4). Churchills approaching Longstop (5). So rough was the country that supplies had to be taken on mules (6); the village is Chaouach.





So This Is Tunis

Photos, Paul Popper, Planet News

When on the morrow of victory, Alexander's men go sightseeing in Tunis, what do they find? A city where the crust of modern French culture is pierced by such relics of Roman rule as this aqueduct (1), where the voice from the minaret calling the Moslem faithful to prayer (2) stills the noise of Oriental bazaars (4), a city of palm-lined avenues (3) and of close-packed homes of Arab and Jew in the native quarter, dominated by the great Mosque of the Olive Tree (5).

VIEWS & REVIEWS

Of Vital War Books

by Hamilton Fyfe

I MUST confess to a prejudice. It is a prejudice against women in uniform. Very few of them seem able to wear it as a matter of course. Far too many have their hair absurdly frizzed or fluffed—I mean it looks absurd under a Service cap. Make-up on the face of a woman in uniform suggests the chorus of a revue. Indeed, I think I agree with a friend of mine who says that with rare exceptions they look like chorus girls or else like schoolmarms. Uniform destroys any distinction or personal charm a woman may possess when she is dressed like a woman; and it appears to bring out and emphasize all her less attractive points—in particular, ugly legs.

But when I read a book like Wings On Her Shoulders (Hutchinson, 8s. 6d.) I feel I have to take all that back. I feel that my prejudice is misplaced. I am moved to admiration and gratitude for the work women in uniform are doing—and, by the way, the photographs of them by Cecil Beaton are first-rate. The book is about the Women's Auxiliary Air Force—I suppose they must be called W.A.A.F.s, though I dislike the term as much as most of them (I believe) dislike it. I have seen lips curl and eyes flash at the query, "Do you prefer the Waafs to the Ats or the Wrens?"

Mrs. Bentley Beauman, the author, was once Woman Editor of The Yorkshire Post; she has put her book together with journalistic skill. It isn't literature, nowhere near it. Yet I can imagine it being a godsend to any historian writing a hundred years hence. For it isn't only about what the Waafs do in uniform; it throws light on the social, intellectual and economic standing of women generally at this present time. Take the matter of pay, for instance. The lowest ranking officer gets 7s. 10d. a day.

This brings her approximately £132 a year when income-tax has been deducted—or £11 a month. In addition she has allowances amounting to about 32s. a month. Her mess bill might be about £5; when she has paid it she has £7 13s. over for all other personal expenditure. As her uniform grant does not cover the cost of an officer's outfit, with tailors' bills rising, part of this has to go to pay the difference in the first months after she is commissioned. If she can provide her own amusement, has private money or friends in the R.A.F., she is well off. Otherwise, with her nose to the war wheel she must argue that all work doesn't necessarily make a dull dog; and if her mind runs in financial channels, there is always the thought that she may some day become a Squadron Officer at 19s. 4d. a day and allowances.

ALL Waafs now get a hot, well-cooked dinner in the middle of the day if they are at a big station or in camp. Earlier on, their meals were not well arranged. Landladies at billets were paid 10d. a day for lodging and attendance, 9d. for breakfast, 8d. for high tea or supper. The airwomen got 1s. 2d. a day for their dinner at N.A.A.F.I. canteens, which were supposed to supply meat, two vegetables and a sweet for 11d., "leaving 3d. for a cup of tea and bun. But practice was not so good." Drawing rations and being fed from the station kitchen makes a lot of difference.

The Waafs are, I suppose, the most popular of the women's war Services. Formed by Royal Warrant on June 28, 1939, there were 48 companies in being when, a bare two months later, the outbreak of war necessitated an immediate call for thousands more airwomen. There was a rush to join as soon as a B.B.C. appeal for recruits had been put on the air. The Director at Adastral House, London, was told a policeman wanted to see her. She had him in.

"You can't do this sort of thing, ma'am," he said.

"What sort of thing?" she asked.

"These 'ere women," he said.

"What women?" she asked.

"These women queueing up."

"Oh, that's all right. Don't worry about that. I've got a perfectly good recruiting staff to cope with them."

"But have you seen them, ma'am?"

"No, why?"

"Well, there's thousands of them. There's a queue stretching right down Kingsway to the Strand, goodness knows where it ends! We can't keep them in order!"

So all who were any good were enlisted. They were not always welcomed. "Old-fashioned officers of misogynistic outlook

Wings On Her Shoulders

said rather rudely nothing would induce them to have any sort of women hanging around their station, in uniform or out." Other officers asked if the Waafs couldn't be put in charge of their wives, "but war did not allow of such happy family parties." However, the system was for some time so informal that difficulties often arose. The women "agreed to certain conditions, but it was a gentleman's agreement. If they cared to break it and go off, leaving their uniform behind so that they could not be sued in the civil courts, nothing could be done to them. Nothing but the minor punishments of fatigues and stoppage of privileges could be imposed if they were absent without leave. Desertions in the first 18 months of war were serious."

Now conditions of service for women are like those for men. This is how a persistent offender against discipline is dealt with: Sergeant's evidence is that she came in late after a dance, and when asked what had happened said, "Shut up, it's none of your business," and threw her pass down without waiting to be booked in, and went out of the Guard Room banging the door. The sergeant has her own view of the case. She thinks there is a boy friend in it. The offender has been "very difficult lately. I can't do anything with her." Having been on the charge sheet for the third time in a fortnight, she is given seven days' minor punishment, which means that after work she must report every hour at the Guard Room, not be allowed to leave camp or go to any entertainment, and be given fatigues such as cleaning out boxrooms or scrubbing floors.

On the whole, women officers are probably rather more sympathetic to women in the ranks than men are inclined to be. One Wing Officer, asking for names of any who were suitable for commissions to be sent in, added "And send ones who are kind." Mrs. Beauman remarks drily that "sympathy and efficiency had sometimes been regarded as awkward bedfellows." Men often do take that view. Women have done very useful work in proving this a mistaken view.

As for the pluck and dogged persistence in sticking to duty when in peril of death that many of the Waafs have displayed, these qualities men gladly and fully recognize. Among the awards for gallantry it is hard to pick out any particular cases. Here are three:

When enemy bombers heavily attacked an R.A.F. Fighter Command Station, Sgt. Turner was the switchboard operator and Cpl. Henderson was in charge of a special telephone line. Bombs were falling around the building, but both airwomen carried on with their jobs, although they knew there was only a light roof over their heads. When the building received a direct hit both continued working till it caught fire and they were ordered to leave.

Cpl. Robins was in a dug-out which received a direct hit during an intense raid. A number of men were killed and two seriously injured. Though dust and fumes filled the shelter, Cpl. Robins immediately went to the assistance of the wounded. She displayed courage and coolness of a very high order in a position of extreme danger.

An aircraft crashed near W.A.A.F. quarters. Cpl. Pearson rushed out and, although the aircraft was burning, and she knew there were bombs aboard, she stood on the wreckage, roused the pilot, who was stunned, and assisted him in getting clear. While he was on the ground, a 120-lb. bomb went off. Cpl. Pearson threw herself on top of the pilot to protect him from blast and splinters. Her prompt and courageous action undoubtedly helped to save the pilot's life.

Yet many who set such magnificent examples of "sticking it" are what would be called "just ordinary girls." One, for instance, turned up on a wet morning with an umbrella. Her explanation was that her raincoat had gone astray, "and I can't get my nice new uniform wet!" Others were heard screaming after a bad raid which they had borne very well. They were afraid not so much of the bombs that were dropping as of the mice in their impromptu quarters! Now, if they had been Nazi mice!

Cpl. PEARSON, E.G.M., whose heroic action is told in Wings On Her Shoulders, reviewed in this page. Her portrait by Dame Laura Knight, R.A., officially commissioned in 1940, is here reproduced.

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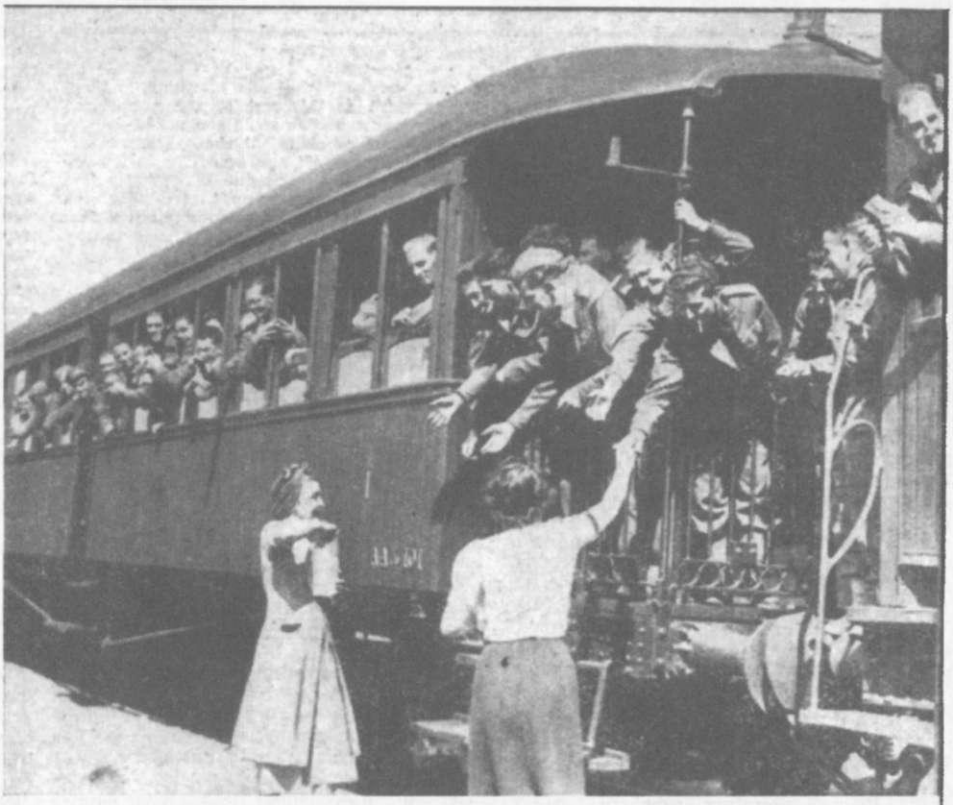
From Italian Prison to the Free Air of England



HOME FROM ITALY. Some four hundred repatriated British prisoners arrived in the hospital ship Newfoundland at a West Country port on April 23, 1943. 1, Women of the British Colony in Lisbon proffer cigarettes to our men en route for England. 2, First men ashore. 3, Capt. Frame, of Glasgow, captured at Tobruk, enjoys his first impressions after landing. 4, A wounded accordion player leads the singing on the upper deck as the ship comes alongside.

Photos, G.P.U., Keystone, P.N.A.

Training Tank Captains for the Coming Battles

CADETS OF THE ROYAL ARMOURED CORPS are trained at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, to become the best tank officers in the world. Above are illustrated some of the tests they have to undergo. 1, Negotiating a rope bridge at tree-top level. 2, Jumping test in parachute-landing training: a 12-ft. drop. 3, Scaling a 30-ft. wooden "cliff" by means of small hand-and-foot holes. 4, A stomach traverse on double ropes slung between two trees. 5, Learning to recognize salient features of tanks from true-to-scale models.

Photos, Central Press

THE WAR IN THE AIR

by Capt. Norman Macmillan, M.C., A.F.C.

It seems a far cry back to the days when our air power appeared to be insufficient to stem the tide of Axis domination. Yet only three years have passed since we were fighting odds of 30 to 1 against us in Norway, seven to one against in France, four to one against in the Battle of Britain. Then there were but three machines for the defence of Malta—three Gladiators nicknamed Faith, Hope, and Charity. "And the greatest of these is charity." I am not sure that "Charity" was the greatest of the three Gladiators in Malta, but I do know that not Mussolini, nor Hitler, nor Kesselring, the tactical general of the two dictators who was personally responsible for the tremendous air assault upon the Mediterranean island, betrayed charity.

What immense courage the British people, all the British people, all over the world have displayed! They have not broken faith during the greatest ordeal in the history of mankind, nor faltered once; although before the War their memory had grown dim, and there were few who chose the unpopular path of trying to revive it.

It is not an easy task to assess how much we owe today to the steady growth of our air power during the past three years, but it is indeed much. The great deliverance of Egypt, the absolute defeat of the Italian and German armies in North Africa, could not have been accomplished without first obtaining superiority in the air. The tank-buster Hurricanes with their two 40-millimetre guns played havoc with Rommel's tanks. Never before have such large guns been mounted to the wings of an aircraft. When one remembers that the Hurricane is a low wing monoplane with full cantilever wings, the successful fitting of these guns represents an engineering triumph characteristic of British technical skill. (See illus. p. 774.)

Air Marshal Sir A. CONINGHAM, A.O.C. N. African Tactical Air Force, photographed recently when giving an address to pilots in his Command in Tunisia. "Thanks to your efforts," he is reported as saying, "the Allies have unchallenged supremacy in the air. We must go on hitting the enemy until he stops from sheer exhaustion." *Photo, British Official: Crown Copyright*

Now the scales have turned. The R.A.F. is a greater air force, measured in the number of our aircraft, than the Luftwaffe. When the relative quality of the aircraft of the two air forces is taken into the account, the power of the R.A.F. is even greater than is indicated by its numerical superiority. But the R.A.F. is not the end of the force that the Axis has to face. There are the United States air forces of the Army and Navy, and there is the Red Air Force of Russia. The present disparity in air power—now so clearly in our favour—will grow and grow until the Axis forces will be overwhelmed by the weight of our blows.

There are two quotations that are particularly applicable to the present change of fortune in the air. One is from Mr. Winston Churchill's broadcast to the world on July 14, 1940. He said: "... be the ordeal sharp or long, or both, we shall seek no terms, we shall tolerate no parley. We may show mercy—we shall ask none."

And the other is from that moving poem of Colonel Macrae's, from which I take:

> If ye break faith with us who die
> We shall not sleep though poppies blow
> In Flanders fields.

The pattern of tactical bombing and machine-and-cannon-gunning of the battle areas by the tactical air force of the Middle East was a perfected piece of military organization. The shooting of the Italian and German fighters from the skies and the destruction of large numbers of these machines upon the enemy aerodromes displayed the pertinacity of the British fighting spirit. The large-scale operations of the Middle East strategic air force upon the ports, communication lines, and industry of the Mediterranean Axis-held zone was a clever dovetailing of the use of air power to prepare the way for conquests yet to come. Indeed, it is possible to say that the successful outcome of the surface fighting in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia was pre-determined by the air planning of Air Chief Marshal Tedder, operating in concert with his colleagues of the British Army, Generals Alexander and Montgomery, and later with General Eisenhower of the American Army. The great victory in Africa was the work of a team. The one-man band of Rommel could not stand up to that team, nor could his ultimate successor Von Arnim.

Our great increase in air power, effected during the course of the actual war, will be regarded by historians as perhaps the greatest feat of industry the world has ever seen. For we have had to build up our strength in the air at the same time as we have had to expend it upon defence and offence. For the successful balancing of aircraft output and aircraft expenditure we have to thank the team of air experts working immediately under the direction of the Prime Minister. It has been rather like the private financial budget of a prudent householder, who, having the wisdom to work and save, has yet been able to spend wisely in order to improve the conditions under which he lived.

Every Plane We Can Turn Out Needed to Win the War

It has not been accomplished without a tremendous effort from the aircraft industry. And it has not been done without complications. We have seen the directors of aircraft companies asked to resign their positions in favour of Government-appointed directors; controllers have been appointed in other cases; in one case, Short Bros. of Rochester, the shares of a company have been taken over entirely by the Government.

Various opinions have been expressed upon the application of the powers which war-time legislation has placed in the hands of the Government. I do not propose to add anything to what has been already said elsewhere upon this subject but this: Now that the war in North Africa has reached its appointed end, we and our Allies face the task of reducing the fortress of Europe which stands embattled in the hands of the two ruthless dictators and their slave-driving minions. However fortunate we may continue to be in action, there can be no doubt that the most difficult task of all lies ahead. If we are to achieve success with the minimum loss in life, and in the shortest possible time, we shall have need of every aeroplane we can turn out to enable us to breach the walls of Fortress Europe and destroy the power of Hitler and Mussolini. And all the time we must maintain, too, the air war against the submarine (our air arm in ever-increasing measure is reducing our losses at sea), and keep up our air pressure against the Japanese, which already has saved the Hawaiian Islands and Australia from invasion.

To achieve so much we must have the greatest possible output of aircraft. Nothing can be permitted to stand in the way of the achievement of our object of producing the biggest obtainable number of aircraft in the ensuing months. Now that we have achieved superiority, it must be kept at all costs. To that end the speeding-up of output is imperative, to make allowance for a possible increase in aircraft losses when our assault upon Fortress Europe commences.

We are fortunate in having the Commonwealth Joint Air Training Plan to give us the opportunity to train air-crews in areas of the world free from enemy interference, where rationing is less onerous, and where changes of climate will improve the physical tone of the air-crews of tomorrow.

Looking back along the years of war, we can marvel at the roughness of the way we have trodden to reach our present happier position in the air. Looking ahead, we have every reason for confidence, for air power has been demonstrated to be the factor essential to military victory; and air power is now almost overwhelmingly in our hands. The power that blasted the enemy out of Africa is seeking fresh fields to conquer.

Latest and Fastest of Britain's Fighter Planes

HAWKER TYPHOON, first officially-released photographs of which are seen above, has had many successes against the Luftwaffe. On April 29, 1943 it was stated that these aircraft had destroyed 40 enemy raiders since the beginning of the year. 1, Typhoon in flight and (2) on the ground. It has a span of 41 ft. 7 in., an overall length of 31 ft. 11 in., and a 2,000-h.p. Napier Sabre engine giving a speed of over 400 m.p.h. Armament consists of four 20-mm. Hispano cannon. 3, Black-and-white camouflage distinguishes it from the F.W. 190. *Photos, Barratts, New York Times Photos, Planet News*

Brave Men of the Air: Some Recent Awards

Act. F./Lt. R. RANKIN, R.A.A.F., awarded D.F.C. for displaying skill in many raids, notably in that on El Aouina last November.

L./A.C. J. A. SKINGSLEY, awarded D.F.M. for throwing overboard a blazing oxygen bottle, thus saving his plane from destruction.

F./Sgt. KEEN, D.F.M., awarded C.G.M. for repairing damaged radio when his plane was hit. He was badly injured.

Sgt. Air Gunner D. SMITH, awarded D.F.M. for trying to save a comrade's life by parachute from blazing bomber. He was made prisoner.

Sgt. L. PARISH, posthumously awarded G.C. for attempting to save a passenger's life in a burning plane in the Sudan.

Sgt. D. NABARRO, aged 21, awarded the first "pooled medal," the D.C.M.—formerly a military decoration, but since last Jan. open to all the Services.

Maj.-Gen. J. LE MESURIER, S.A.A.F., awarded D.F.C. for completing a fine record of operational flying and displaying remarkable powers of leadership.

Act. W./Cdr. G. GIBSON, D.S.O., D.F.C., awarded a bar to the latter decoration for his splendid achievement in completing 172 sorties.

F./O. D. GREAVES (right) and 2nd W./O. F. ROBBINS, awarded D.F.C. As pilot and observer they flew together and cooperated in the destruction of 5 enemy planes. They are seen with an improvised gramophone in N. Africa.

F./Lt. J. LE ROUX, awarded a bar to his D.F.C. for courageously destroying 5 enemy planes. He has also successfully attacked shipping and ground targets.

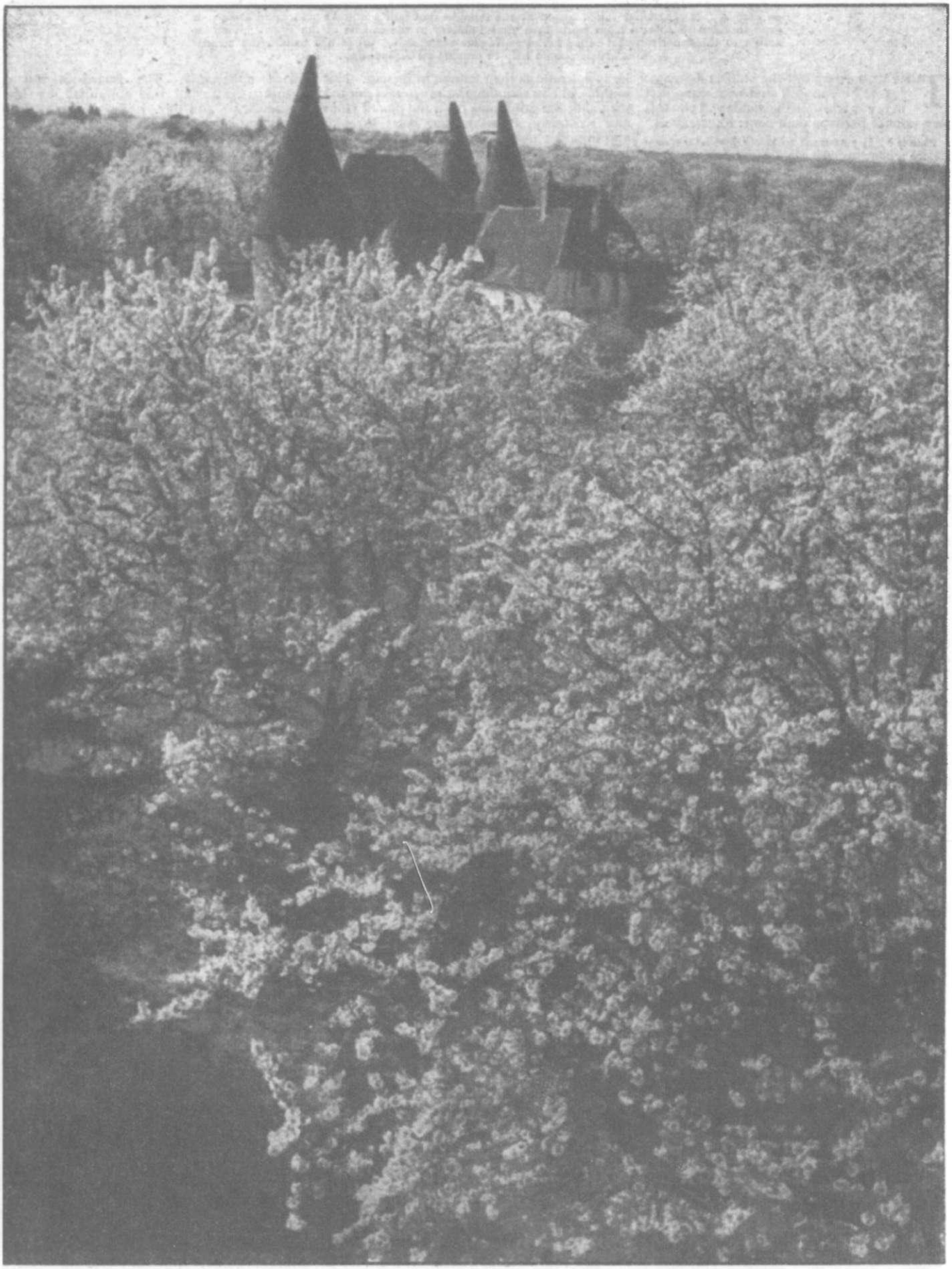
Act. F./Lt. E. H. Glazebrook, R.C.A.F., awarded D.F.C. for displaying outstanding leadership in many sorties over Sicily and in heavy fighting over Malta. He has destroyed three enemy aircraft.

F./O. E. L. MUSGRAVE, R.A.A.F., awarded D.F.C. for successfully bombing an enemy merchant ship in the Channel despite heavy opposition. Although his plane was damaged he managed to fly it to safety.

F./O. D. IBBOTSON, R.A.F.V.R., awarded D.F.C. for destroying seven enemy aircraft during the W. Desert campaign. His keenness and determination have been an inspiration to all with whom he has worked.

Photos, British Official : Crown Copyright; T. C. Proffitt, Daily Mirror, News Chronicle

Spring's Promise of a Bountiful Fruit Crop



APPLE BLOSSOM IN KENT, appearing a month earlier than had been known in this orchard for 30 years, surrounds these oasthouses in pink and white clouds. So fine a display should portend a record apple harvest. Tests in drying English fruit last season proved that colour and flavour of apples, pears, etc., could be perfectly preserved. Further tests are to be carried out this year. Oasthouses in which for years malt and hops have been dried are suitable for drying the fruit.

Photo, News Chronicle

This Strike Was a Gamble with Men's Lives

"The Russian man in the street," cabled Harold King, Reuter's Special Correspondent in Moscow, on May 4, "is somewhat taken aback at the thought that half a million men could abstain or even threaten to abstain from work in a vital industry in the middle of the War." This reaction to the American coal strike found worldwide expression. What lies behind the strike? This article should help to provide an explanation.

THEY'RE turning out the stuff in America, *yes sir*! The stuff that wins wars, that in brave and capable hands will win this war, sooner perhaps than some folks expect.

Planes? If you want to know just how many we are producing, says Mr. Donald Nelson, Chairman of the U.S. Production Board, airplane output in March reached a new high of 6,200; and for the first time heavy bomber production passed the 500-a-month mark. Tanks? Not far short of 3,000 were delivered. Guns? In the first quarter of 1943 we produced nearly 18,000 artillery pieces, including 7,000 anti-aircraft and more than 8,000 anti-tank guns. Our factories also turned out 235,000 machine-guns and more than a million rifles and sub-machine-guns. Ships? Well, March was a bumper month there, too. We put the battleship Iowa into commission, not to mention a number of smaller vessels that gave the month a lead of 17 per cent over February. As for merchant vessels—deliveries by the U.S. Maritime Commission climbed in March to five *a day*. Of the 134 major-type ships delivered, 103 were liberty ships. Motor vehicle output was up by 8 per cent over February's total, clothing production was up 10 per cent. And if you are among that dwindling majority who think that money still means something big in wartime, you may like to know that the U.S. Treasury and Government Corporations spent more than seven thousand million dollars in March on war purposes, compared with "only" six thousand millions the month before.

These are just some of Mr. Nelson's figures. They make encouraging reading, particularly when they are taken in conjunction with the figures of Lend-Lease shipments announced at about the same time by Mr. Stettinius, U.S. Lease-Lend administrator. But this is the bright side of a picture which has a not-so-bright reverse. On the last Saturday night in April all but a few thousands of America's 530,000 coal miners answered the strike call of their union, the United Mine Workers—biggest and most powerful of America's trade unions, whose president is Mr. John L. Lewis.

Why was the strike call issued? Not, we are assured, because the mine workers are against the war or politically disaffected in any way. The miners of America are held to be as patriotic as their fellows in Britain. Not politics, but an economic issue brought out the men with the cap-lamps from the pits of Ohio and Kentucky, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Illinois; that, and a complicated tissue of intense antagonisms and rivalries which for years past has been playing the devil with America's industrial set-up.

Briefly put, the economic issue boils down to that race between wages and cost of living about which we know something—too much, indeed—in this country.

America's miners have a hard job—though not so hard seemingly as the men working in our own coalfields, since over there the coal is got at more easily: the layers lie flat, and the miners go down only a thousand feet or so, whereas here in Britain the layers are mostly tilted and we have mines burrowing 4,000 ft. under the ground, even some way under the sea. Then in America, as in Britain, the miner's life is a dangerous one, thousands being killed or injured every year. But it isn't these things that the American miner grumbles about. The real trouble apparently is that, as Don Iddon, The Daily Mail's New York correspondent, put it the other day in a highly-informative dispatch, "the men who dig coal are having a fierce struggle to make ends meet, and that is the simple truth."

The United Mine Workers are seeking an increase in pay of two dollars a day so as to catch up with the cost of living. According to figures presented on May 6 by the coal owners to the War Labour Board (on which public, management, and labour are represented) the cost of living for miners increased by only 24 per cent from 1941 to January 1943, while wages increased 73 per cent from October 1940 to February 1943. These figures would no doubt be challenged by the U.M.W., but their spokesman, J. L. Lewis, was ostentatiously absent from the inquiry. "The latch-string is on the outside of the door," said Mr. Morris Cooke, the chairman; but John Llewellyn showed no inclination to pull it. He has no time for the War Labour Board apparently. The Board is not a statutory body, but one appointed by Mr. Roosevelt; and Mr. Lewis is opposed to the President and all his works.

Years ago the situation was very different. In his early days Lewis was a member of the Republican party; but he supported Mr. Roosevelt's candidature in the election of 1936. But by 1940 the President had incurred Mr. Lewis's ire; and before the presidential election of 1940 the labour chieftain pledged himself to retire from the presidency of the C.I.O. (Committee of Industrial Organizations) if Mr. Roosevelt were re-elected. Roosevelt beat Willkie, and Lewis was as good as his word. Philip Murray, No. 2 of the U.M.W., took his place as the head of the C.I.O., and Lewis was forced to concentrate on his job as president of the United Mine Workers. But of late he has been able to stage something of a comeback; and in company with "Big Bill" Henderson, head of the Carpenters' Union (one of the craft unions comprising the American Federation of Labour, for years the deadly rival of the more recently established C.I.O., union of the general or industrial unions), he is said to be forming a Republican faction in the ranks of organized labour.

A dynamic personality, pugnacious and self-assertive, highly gifted in organization and a powerful speaker, Lewis has the enthusiastic, possibly unthinking, support of not only the miners but many thousands more of American workers. He himself thinks he is strong enough to challenge the President. If there is to be a show-down, it will be (he believes) the wealthy squire of the White House and Hyde Park who will take the count . . .

BUT here he has not made sufficient allowance for the President. He too is a powerful personality, and one, moreover, more calculated to appeal to the great mass of Americans, white-collared and horny-handed, to the betterment of whose lot no American has contributed more. On May 1 Mr. Roosevelt ordered Mr. Harold Ickes, who is Administrator of Solid Fuels as well as Secretary of the Interior, to take immediate possession of all the coalmines affected by the stoppage; and within a few hours the U.S. military were on guard at the pits, above which flew the Stars and Stripes. In a broadcast to the nation two days later the President revealed himself in fighting mood.

"I want to make it clear," he forcefully declared, "that every American coalminer who has stopped mining coal—no matter how sincere his motives, no matter how legitimate he may believe his grievances to be—every idle miner directly and individually is obstructing our war effort . . The stopping of the coal supply, even for a short time, would involve a gamble with the lives of American soldiers and sailors and the future security of our whole people. It would involve an unwarranted, unnecessary and terribly dangerous gamble with our chances of victory."

In face of so resolute an attitude it was hardly surprising that the strike was called off; indeed, twenty minutes before the President's voice was heard on the air Mr. Lewis had given out that he had reached agreement with Mr. Ickes for the members of his union to return to the pits for a 15-day period beginning on May 4. The miners, he said, had now a new employer, the U.S. Government, and negotiations for a settlement would be resumed forthwith.

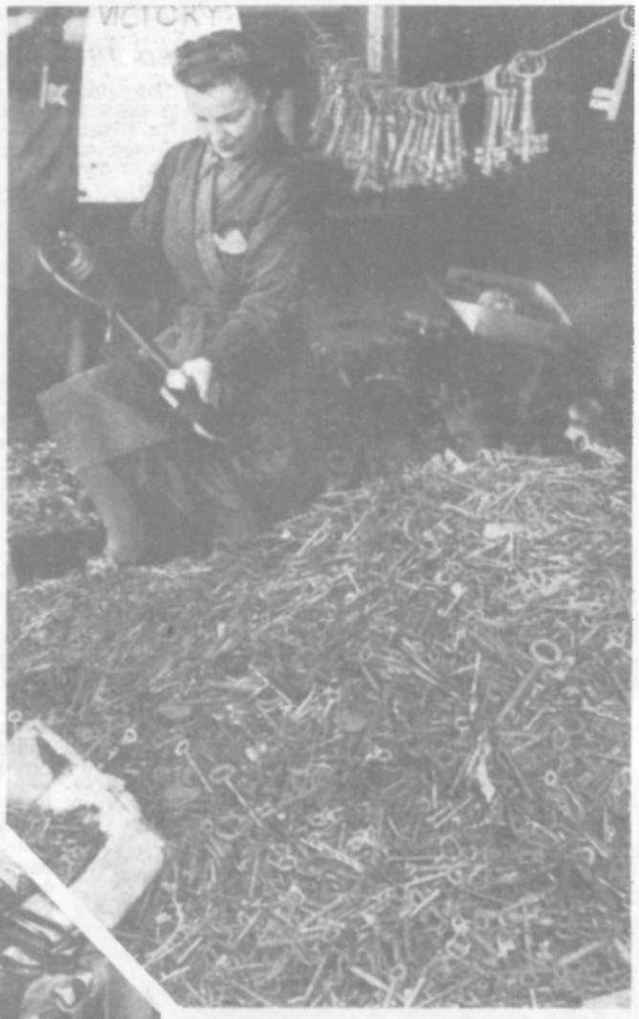
So for the time being—a fortnight at least—there was a truce. But the problem itself remained—a challenge to those who, on either side, direct America's industrial life; a menace, only averted for a brief space, to the successful effort of all the United Nations.

E. ROYSTON PIKE

WORKERS OF AMERICA have "taken their coats off" so as to make their country the Arsenal of Democracy in very deed. All the same, that there is grave dissatisfaction in their ranks, particularly over the rising cost of living, is evidenced by the coal dispute which is still far from settled. Above is a typical crowd of U.S. shipyard workers. *Photo, Sport & General*

Into War's Byways Goes Our Roving Camera

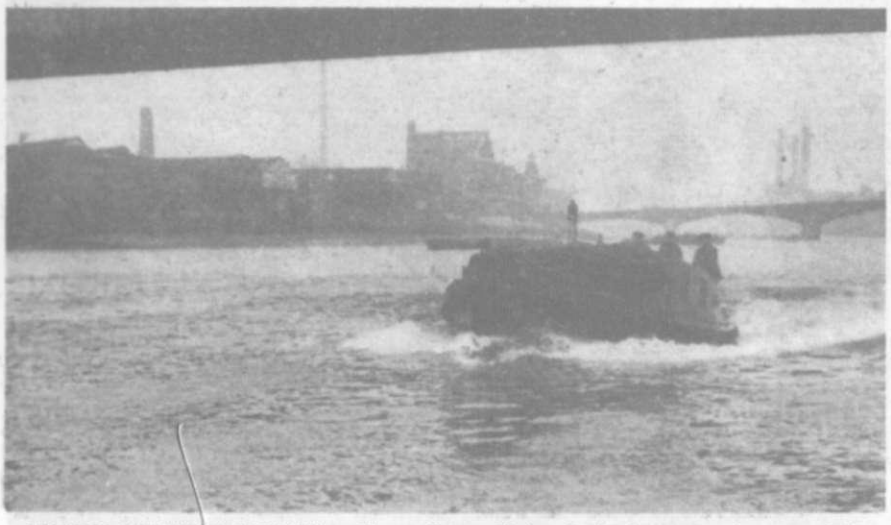
VOLUNTEER LAND CORPS CAMPS are being erected in various parts of the country. Above, a number of volunteers waiting to register at a recently completed camp at Staines, Middlesex.



OVER TWO TONS OF KEYS were recently collected by the Gas Light and Coke Co. in a salvage drive. Among the 150,000 brought in were keys of every shape and size. This girl examines a giant specimen from the vast pile.

SIXTY TONS OF A.T.S. CLOTHING are issued every week by one hundred and fifty A.T.S. auxiliaries, storekeepers and clerks. The A.T.S. have taken over a section of a large Midland store which clothes a proportion of the British Army, and are entirely running their own organization. This photograph gives some idea of the vast quantities of clothing required. Civilian workers are busily stacking a pile of battledress to be worn by their military sisters.

PLAQUE TO U.S. AIRMAN. Lt. H. D. Johnson, D.F.C., U.S.A.A.F., sacrificed his life last Nov. when he crash-landed his plane on a football ground to save civilians living in Edward Road, Walthamstow. A piece of the plane's propeller mounted in a glass case was unveiled at the scene of his sacrifice on April 4, 1943.



SCHOOL FOR RIVER FIREMEN at Cheyne House, Chelsea Embankment, teaches men of the National Fire Service how to combat river fires during heavy air bombardments, a task which calls for considerable skill and courage. This fire float is shown passing downstream as it approaches Albert Bridge on one of its practice tests.

Photos, Planet News, L.N.A., Fox, Sport & General, Associated Press

I WAS THERE! Eye Witness Stories of the War

Even the Italians Flocked to Greet Us at Sfax

"There really isn't much to laugh at in desert warfare," says Clifford Webb, War Correspondent in Tunisia of The Daily Herald (from which this story is reprinted). But he encountered amusing incidents that lightened the grimness of the general scene preceding and during the 8th Army's triumphal entry into Sfax on April 10, 1943.

FOUR or five hours earlier I had crouched in a ditch just off the road between Mahares and Sfax, while the enemy hurled across the last few shells in his rear-guard defence before being nosed out of this important harbour town and sent running by our spearhead force.

The delay between the enemy's withdrawal and the actual entry into Sfax was due to the discovery of a minefield. It stretched across the road and effectively barred the way to all traffic until the sappers went forward and cleared it. While the engineers prodded the road and road verges with bayonets, I saw the front wheels of a lorry hurtle into the air as one deadly mine exploded with a shattering roar. Fortunately, all the occupants escaped without a scratch.

An Italian officer, leading a straggling column over the field towards the road, was called on to surrender. He was highly indignant at the request. He explained with much hauteur that he and his men had already surrendered a couple of miles farther forward, and that it was not usual to surrender twice.

British infantrymen and machine-gunners, who had successfully tackled the last German rearguard in a spirited night action, munched bread and bacon and sipped steaming tea as they waited for the mines to be lifted. The sun rose, and soon it was time for the cavalcade of battle to move off. I accompanied the triumphal parade.

About a mile outside the town the infantry debussed, formed up and swung into a march behind the leading tanks. Delighted French people, who had cowered in their battered buildings from the noise of war during the night, came out to greet the conquerors.

The ceremonial parade took the main thoroughfare to the harbour, while platoons of shock troops threaded their way through side streets and made for the aerodrome. Sfax had certainly taken a battering from the air, but there was no doubt about the genuine nature of the French people's welcome.

So hard have Rommel's rearguards been pressed they have scarcely had time to dig in roadside positions before our troops were among them. Moving columns of guns, light tanks and lorried infantry have swung off the road and into action in a matter of minutes, cleaning up enemy pockets relentlessly and pushing forward with all speed.

On Friday (April 9) there were light artillery duels at little more than 2,000 yards range, and on one occasion our gunners, running off the road to shoot, found that they had set up their guns right in an abandoned enemy ammunition dump.

"Any Jerry stuff landing near would have blown up half Tunisia," a gunner officer told me, "but there was no time for finessing. We just shot him out of the way before he had time to reply with any accuracy." Another incident typifying the close nature of the chase was the arrival in our lines of a German ambulance, complete with wounded.

I don't know who was the more astonished, our men or the German driver, who had no idea that that particular part of the country was in our hands. He climbed down from the cabin with a gesture and almost comic look of bewilderment to join the already long line of prisoners, while our medical men took charge of the wounded.

It is difficult to give you in Britain any real idea of what this kind of advance means. On paper or on the radio it is Medenine one day, Gabès a couple of days later, a brief battle at Akarit and then Sfax, and so on.

I travelled 140 miles on Saturday to cover about 70 miles in a straight line. Blown-up roads and bridges and mines were expected, and we were rarely disappointed. Charred and wrecked enemy transport, blasted by the R.A.F., littered the roads. Men who died when the vehicles were hit had been hastily buried in the roadside almond groves, their steel helmets decorating the rough graves and their names scribbled on pieces of wood.

Officers tore up and down the road in Jeeps, returning or going out on reconnaissance patrols, during which they sometimes deliberately offered themselves as targets to enemy gunners to discover the guns' position.

The manner in which the Italians have flocked over to us during the past few days has suggested mass desertion rather than genuine surrender. They amble back towards our rear positions unguarded, but perfectly happy and quite brazenly delighted that their war efforts have finished.

As told in this page, Sfax's inhabitants welcomed the 8th Army on April 10, 1943. This radioed photo shows some of them riding on a British tank. *Photo, British Official*

There isn't much to laugh at in desert warfare. But it is funny to see a head-scratching military policeman puzzling what to do with a mob of gesticulating Italian prisoners, who surround him like a lot of children surrounding the vicar at a Sunday school treat.

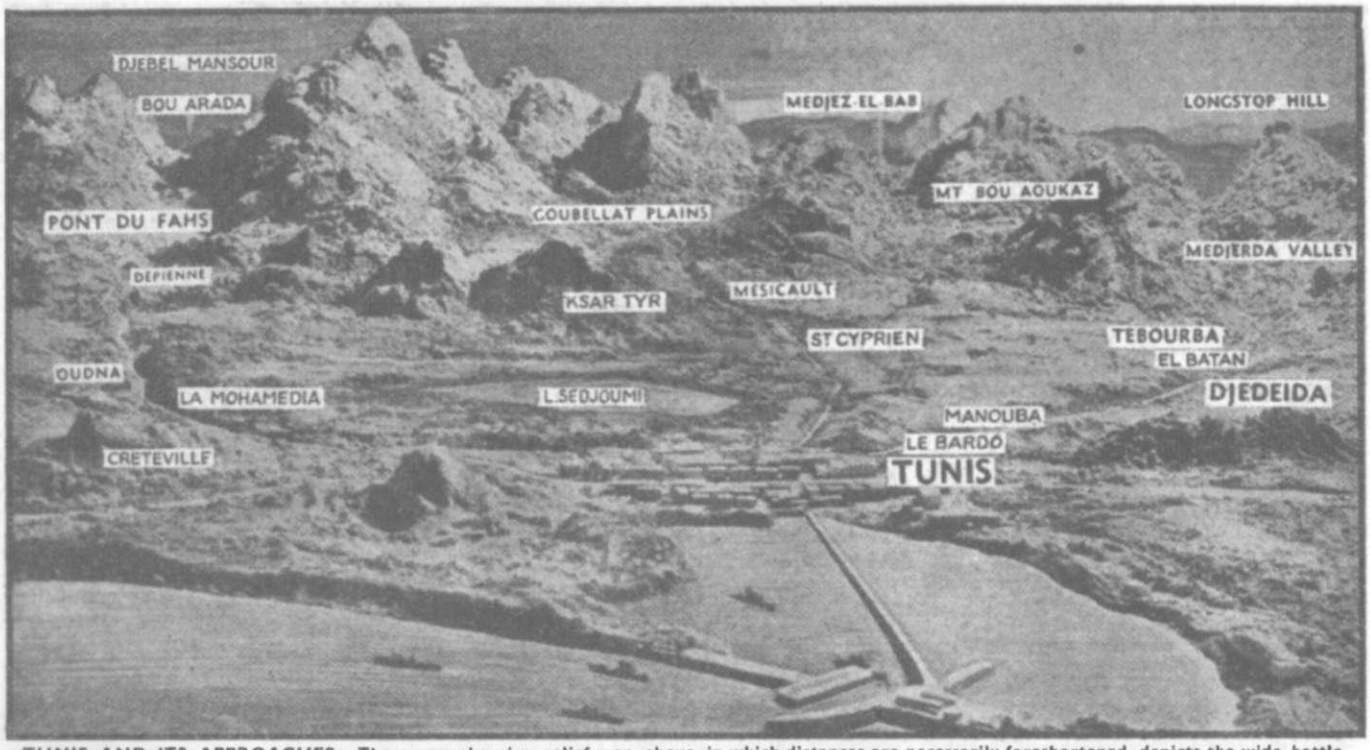
How We Flung the Nazis Off Longstop Hill

One of the most strongly fortified Axis positions in Tunisia, Longstop Hill dominating the Medjez-el-Bab-Tunis road, stood in the path of the First Army's westward drive. Bitter fighting cleared the last German from the formidable height on Easter Monday morning, April 26, 1943. War Correspondent Alan Moorehead sent to The Daily Express (from which we reproduce the story) the following front-line dispatch a few hours after the victory.

A BLINDING hot sun blazes down on scrub, and there is a watery heat haze on each succeeding height. As you tramp upward you are half-choked with fine white dust from returning ambulances and tanks, and then sweat makes runnels through the dust on your arms and face as you go higher and get hotter.

Every few yards the ground is pitted with mortar shell blast, and the surrounding grass is dead and withered—as though some disease had blighted the plants. You reach the top of each ridge only to find another ahead, and then you see the front-line infantry. They seem to swarm everywhere. This particular spot where I have been standing almost looks like a stage set. A zigzag trench makes an open suture through the

LONGSTOP, the formidable height on the road to Tebourba, was stormed by the 1st Army on April 26, 1943. Infantry are here moving up in the initial stages of our shattering attack, an account of which commences in this page. In the background is one of "those incredible Churchills" which clawed their way up gradients of 1 in 3. *Photo, British Official*



TUNIS AND ITS APPROACHES. The comprehensive relief-map above, in which distances are necessarily foreshortened, depicts the wide battle-field stretching down from the heights to Tunis Harbour and the open sea in the foreground. In the background, extreme right, Longstop Hill (see accompanying text) 25 miles from Tunis, rises above the Medjerda Valley. Below, an impression of twin-peaked Longstop during our storming of this vital objective. *Top, Courtesy of Sunday Times and Sunday Graphic. Bottom, Drawing by F. D. Blake; Courtesy of The Daily Express*

camel thorn, and on the freshly-turned yellow earth the men have flung their battledress jackets, their mess tins and empty ammunition boxes.

Men lie about, half in and half out of the trench, not talking much, but smoking, waiting, watching. Each time a shell comes over they cock their heads slightly, listen shrewdly to its whine which gives the direction, and then relax, hardly bothering to look where it falls in billowing smoke—perhaps half a mile away, perhaps 200 yards, but anyway not in the trench. They have been shelled all night, and far heavier than this. They stormed these heights against point-blank fire three days ago, and have been mortared on and off ever since. Perhaps two men in three are left.

Month-old copies of London newspapers lie about, and one big headline is turned up: "*No more wars after this, says Eden.*" They laugh right along the trench until another shell goes over, and then the talk goes round to something else: "*Where is the Eighth Army? What is happening across the valley? You can tell Winston Churchill this—we have been in the line since December.*" There is no bitterness about their complaints. They are just practical. The only thing that stirred them was the report made in one paper that front-line troops are getting poached eggs on toast for breakfast, and that does not sound very funny to men who had nothing much but bully and water for four days.

DOWN the slopes of the hill odd groups of prisoners are still being rooted out of caves. All Germans these. Canvas jackboots, corduroy trousers, gabardine jackets, cloth caps with red, white and black badge. They wear wings over their breast pockets. They are from Rommel's Afrika Korps. Their eyes are red-rimmed from fatigue, but otherwise they march in good order through the dust, unable to comprehend they are prisoners, but dumbly grateful that they are alive.

Each time a shell comes over—ours or German—they break ranks and scatter through the scrub. Only one German captain makes a fuss, demanding to see a British officer. A Scots corporal bleakly motions him forward. In a farmyard shed the Germans are searched, and they stand and watch while British Tommies go through their packs.

I saw a letter sent to one prisoner from Germany. It is an hysterical account of the damage done to Berlin; and it concludes, "Be pitiless, for the English have no pity." Mounting to the heights of Longstop you meet other infantry. Beneath several layers of grimy beard you see the face of a major to whom they already gave the D.S.O. before he led this charge straight over each crest of hill, and it is not much good asking him what happened.

He says vaguely: "Oh, I don't know. I shouted, 'Come on,' and the boys jumped up and ran forward yelling at the top of their voices. We found Germans cowering in their trenches—it was probably the noise that made the Jerries give in."

Those incredible Churchills. One of them mounted to the ultimate crest of Longstop, a place where you would think hardly a fly could cling. They outclimb any German tank. I watched a couple of them tilted at an impossible angle climb to the crests of Djebel Ang. As they ground through rocks over the summit they suddenly found themselves confronted with six German tanks, two of them Tigers. These were sheltering in the next valley, and the Germans were apparently so astonished at seeing British tanks among crags that they turned round and scooted in the direction of Tunis.

With a good deal of evidence to back him up a general said to me here today: "Put a Churchill against German infantry and they will surrender at once." And yet here on Longstop they were dug-in as well as troops may be behind mines.

I have been hiding myself in some of their shallower trenches, but I believe there are others that go six feet into the earth and then have a cave cut horizontally at the bottom. The Germans simply hid down there while our barrage was on, then when our infantry charged they fired their machine-guns on fixed lines by remote control. They just squeezed the trigger from below ground.

Standing here on Longstop you see all the battlefield spread out below and all the figures and facts given you back at divisional and brigade headquarters suddenly become alive and have meaning. Straight south across the unbelievably green and flowering Medjerda Valley we saw shells bursting ten miles away. That was the battle for Wadi Ahuror we crossed last night.

A bridge blew up behind our troops there and now they are holding on while reinforcements come up by a detour. Ahead our fighters are plastering lines of trees. That is the Tebourba road where German transport is hastening eastward. I heard the calm, reasonable voice of a brigade major calling for this raid only one hour ago.

Away to the south on Goubellat plain there is a steady grumbling of bombing and artillery. That is where our tanks are advancing on German armour. They got six 88-mm. guns yesterday, and one of these is already in action on our side.

We cannot, of course, see Djebel Mansour, another landmark in this campaign. It dominates the Bou Arada-Pont du Fahs valley, and now today there is news we have that height without resistance. In the far north, too, French Goums are within five miles of Bizerta lakes. All this we can either see or hear about on Longstop, and from here on a clear day you almost look into Tunis itself.

In Tripoli I Found No 'Little Caesars'

When the 8th Army marched into Tripoli on January 23, 1943, the British military administration found it to be a bankrupt city in a bankrupt country. Peter Duffield, Special Correspondent in Tripoli of The Evening Standard (from which this account is reprinted), describes how this region of Mussolini's much-vaunted African empire is now progressing under the new management.

I HAVE talked today to 46-year-old Brigadier Lush, head of the British Military Administration in Tripolitania, who has already had experience in the "rebirth of nations" in Ethiopia and Madagascar. Under him are men drawn from almost every British, Colonial and Foreign service—from Nigeria, East Africa, Palestine and Egypt.

It is months since the Eighth Army marched into Tripoli, and Mussolini might be interested to hear how this region of his much-vaunted, much-vanished African empire is progressing under new management.

First, it ought to be remembered that the British military administration found Tripoli a bankrupt city in a bankrupt country—a people bankrupt financially, materially, and mentally. Public works had been sabotaged, stores had been looted, food exhausted. The colonists had been left unprotected.

And in Tripoli itself, where the upper crust of civic and political rulers had shamelessly fled, the beaten, stupefied, listless and casually abandoned Italians had been forced to watch the whole fiduciary façade of Fascism crumble in front of them.

Into this town, and facing this bankruptcy, came the British political officers. They sat at the grandiose desks in the grandiose offices. They slept in the hotels. They took over from the hierarchy of little Caesars who had been running the market garden empire. They tried to make a motionless concern into a going concern.

It was, and is, their job to maintain order and to see that the lives, domestic peace, honour and religious convictions of the inhabitants are respected, and generally to weld, as best they can, the civil administration with the demands of the Eighth Army.

This the administration has done with due regard to humanitarianism and with due avoidance of molly-coddling. One particular thing has impressed the Arabs—deliverance from Italian rule. The second is rain. The Eighth Army have made the Arab a present of both.

I went to a tea party to meet the leaders of the Arabs in Tripolitania, and, sipping green tea with them, I learned that they are grateful and happy for their deliverance. These intelligent leaders refer to the Eighth Army as "the army with wet feet," which is quite a different thing from the army with cold feet.

They regard Montgomery as a kind of miracle man who brought them a prodigious wet season. In rural areas farmers are looking forward to the best crops for 12 years.

The Jews are grateful for their release from Italian rule, and, like the Arabs, they are receiving with delight the news of the success of the Eighth Army in Tunisia. Under the old regime the rule for the 30,000 Tripolitanian Jews was "to us all doors are closed doors."

One of the most interesting men I talked to was the Italian manager of the Tripoli brewery, now producing beer for the British troops, who is a typical deluded Fascist, and who insists that Britain provoked this war. But he is nevertheless astonished to read each day in the Italian newspaper published by the British the Italian communiqué—verbatim.

I met, too, Italian colonists who wish to be left alone with their acres. They have accepted the British administration, essentially a stop-gap, short-term authority, until the end of the war. Until the peace conference decides the ultimate fate and ownership of Tripolitania, the British can merely care for and maintain the country and the people.

OUR DIARY OF THE WAR

APRIL 28, 1943, Wednesday *1,334th day*

Sea.—Light naval forces, including destroyers Goathland and Albrighton, attacked heavily-escorted enemy convoy off Ushant and hit two supply-ships and two escort vessels.

Air.—Large-scale mining operations by R.A.F. in Baltic caused loss of 23 bombers. Soviet aircraft again raided Königsberg.

Mediterranean.—Daylight raids on Messina and Naples by U.S. bombers.

APRIL 29, Thursday *1,335th day*

North Africa.—Enemy counter-attacks in Medjez-el-Bab sector repulsed after bitter fighting.

Australasia.—Allied bombers raided Jap seaplane base on Amboina.

General.—Laval received at Hitler's headquarters.

APRIL 30, Friday *1,336th day*

Air.—Essen heavily bombed by R.A.F.

North Africa.—Very heavy fighting continued on First Army front.

Mediterranean.—U.S. aircraft again raided Messina during daylight.

Australasia.—U.S. aircraft raided Kahili and Vila in Solomons and Munda in New Georgia.

U.S.A.—American aircraft made 13 more attacks on Kiska and also bombed Attu.

General.—U.S.A. broke relations with Adm. Robert, Governor of Martinique.

MAY 1, Saturday *1,337th day*

Air.—U.S. heavy bombers made daylight raid on St. Nazaire.

Mediterranean.—Announced that 15 Axis ships, including two destroyers, had been sunk by Allied bombers and submarines.

MAY 2, Sunday *1,338th day*

Sea.—Admiralty announced loss of ex-American destroyer Beverley.

Air.—Mosquitoes made dusk raid on railway workshops at Thionville.

North Africa.—U.S. and French troops in N. Tunisia advanced towards Bizerta.

Russian Front.—Soviet H.Q. announced failure of six-day German offensive in area of Novorossisk.

Australasia.—Fifty Jap bombers and fighters raiding Darwin were intercepted by Spitfires.

U.S.A.—Eight more American air raids on Kiska.

General.—German S.S. leader in Poland, Wilhelm Krueger, killed in Cracow.

MAY 3, Monday *1,339th day*

Sea.—Admiralty announced loss of submarine Turbulent.

North Africa.—American troops occupied Mateur, S. of Bizerta.

Mediterranean.—Fighter-bombers from Malta raided Lampedusa aerodrome.

Russian Front.—Soviet bombers made night attacks on Gomel, Minsk and Briansk.

U.S.A.—American bombers and fighters made nine more attacks on Kiska.

General.—Gen. Andrews, U.S. Commander in Europe, killed in air accident over Iceland.

MAY 4, Tuesday *1,340th day*

Air.—Daylight raids by U.S. heavy bombers on Antwerp and by R.A.F. at The Hague and Abbeville. By night R.A.F. made first major attack on Dortmund; 30 bombers missing.

North Africa.—French launched attack S. of Zaghouan, near Pont du Fahs.

China.—U.S. bombers raided Jap bases in Hainan and Indo-China.

Australasia.—Announced that U.S. forces had occupied Russell I., N.W. of Guadalcanal.

MAY 5, Wednesday *1,341st day*

North Africa.—Jebel Bou Aoukas, N.E. of Medjez-el-Bab, captured by First Army troops.

Russian Front.—Krymskaya, in the Kuban, captured by Soviet troops. Russian bombers raided Dnepropetrovsk and Briansk by night.

MAY 6, Thursday *1,342nd day*

Sea.—Admiralty announced loss of submarine Sahib.

North Africa.—First Army, with strong air support, launched major offensive in Medjez-el-Bab area; Massicault, 16 m. from Tunis, taken by storm. In northern sector Americans and French launched offensive towards Bizerta.

Mediterranean.—Liberators made heavy daylight raid on Reggio, in toe of Italy, following night attack by R.A.F.

Russian Front.—Soviet bombers and fighters destroyed or damaged 350 aircraft in raids on enemy airfields.

U.S.A.—U.S. Army aircraft made five attacks on Kiska and seven on Attu.

MAY 7, Friday *1,343rd day*

North Africa.—Tunis captured by First Army and Bizerta by U.S. troops; French occupied Pont du Fahs.

Australasia.—Allied heavy bombers raided aerodrome at Madang, New Guinea.

U.S.A.—Navy Dept. announced that in January U.S. forces had occupied Amchitka, in Rat Island group of Aleutians.

MAY 8, Saturday *1,344th day*

North Africa.—Tebourba and Djedeida occupied by Allied troops; French captured Zaghouan; naval forces shelled enemy positions on Cape Bon.

Mediterranean.—Allied aircraft made heavy attack on island of Pantellaria.

Australasia.—Another heavy Allied raid on Madang; Japanese troopship sunk in harbour.

MAY 9, Sunday *1,345th day*

North Africa.—Organized fighting ceased in N.E. Tunisia, where six German generals surrendered to 2nd U.S. Corps; enemy resistance continued round Zaghouan and in Cape Bon peninsula, which was blockaded by naval forces and heavily attacked from the air.

Mediterranean.—Over 400 U.S. aircraft made daylight raid on Palermo, Sicily; Messina also bombed.

Burma.—Announced that in Arakan British had evacuated Buthidaung in face of Japanese threat of encirclement.

Australasia.—Catalina flying-boats raided aerodrome at Babo, New Guinea.

MAY 10, Monday *1,346th day*

Sea.—Admiralty announced loss of destroyer Pakenham.

North Africa.—Armoured units of First Army drove across neck of Cape Bon, cutting off enemy troops in the peninsula from those holding out round Zaghouan.

Russian Front.—Soviet Air Force made heavy raids on Kiev, Briansk and Orel.

Mediterranean.—Flying Fortresses made heavy attacks on airfields in Sicily; Pantellaria docks and airfield again raided.

Australasia.—Jap fighters raided airfield on Millingimbi Island, off N. Australia.

General.—Lt.-Gen. Devers arrived in London as U.S. Commander in Europe.

MAY 11, Tuesday *1,347th day.*

North Africa.—First Army patrols made complete circuit of Cape Bon peninsula; First and Eighth Armies closed in on enemy still resisting near Zaghouan.

Mediterranean.—Heavy U.S. raid on Catania, Sicily; Marsala and Pantellaria also attacked.

Russian Front.—Soviet Air Force raided railways at Briansk, Orel, Kharkov, Krasnograd, Poltava, Lozovaya, and Dnepropetrovsk.

Burma.—In the Arakan peninsula our troops withdrew from Maungdaw.

U.S.A.—American forces landed on Japanese-occupied island of Attu, in the Aleutians.

General.—Announced that Mr. Churchill had arrived in Washington. Announced that troops from Barbados had embarked for Dominica in connexion with the "Martinique affair."

Flash-backs

1940

May 2. *Allied troops in Norway S. of Trondheim evacuated from Aandalsnes and Namsos.*

May 10. *Germans invaded Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg. Mr. Churchill became Premier. British troops landed in Iceland.*

1941

May 2. *Announced that evacuation of Greece was completed; 43,000 out of 60,000 men withdrawn.*

May 5. *Haile Selassie re-entered Addis Ababa in triumph.*

May 6. *Stalin replaced Molotov as Russian Premier.*

May 10. *Very heavy night raid on London; 33 bombers destroyed. Hess landed in Scotland by parachute.*

1942

April 28. *"Baedeker" raid on York.*

May 1. *Japanese entered Mandalay.*

May 2. *Cruiser Edinburgh sunk during passage of Arctic convoy.*

May 3. *Seven-day Battle of the Coral Sea began.*

May 5. *British troops landed in Madagascar.*

May 6. *Corregidor, Philippines, fell after five months' siege.*

Editor's Postscript

OF the many books that I should have liked to write were the allotted span anything over a hundred years rather than a mere seventy, was one that would tell the world something of what Britain has done, not merely to save Europe and America, but to save civilization. It is a grand theme, but the ingrained habit of the Briton not to boost in print his own achievements explains no doubt why so little has been written about it. When I managed to interest my colleague, Mr. Hamilton Fyfe, in the idea, I was happy because he, who has given hostages as a journalist to the people's cause, would command a sympathetic audience where I might be regarded as a mere Imperialist. So he has written his book with my title: But For Britain . . . I have read his manuscript with pleasure and approval, although his thesis does not run on the lines mine would have followed; and I am glad to know that it is being published immediately by Macdonald & Co., the enterprising firm of publishers who have issued Mr. Shinwell's The Britain I Want. If you can afford the modest price of 5s. I am sure you will be glad to add it to your bookshelves; and if not, I hope you will ask for it at your library.

WHEN the "amenities" on which people can spend their money nowadays are so few, it is a little surprising to learn that the number of convictions for drunkenness is falling rapidly. In large measure, of course, this happy state of affairs is due to the tremendous increase in taxation on alcoholic drinks of every kind: there is not a Budget which does not put something on the cost of the working-man's pint and the wealthy fellow's bottle of whisky. Then, too, as regards beer it is so very much weaker than it used to be. As Lord Woolton told us some time ago, those who, like himself, were anxious to see some reduction in the amount of excessive drunkenness in the slums of this country twenty-five years ago, "begged and prayed for a light drink which the working people might have which would give them more pleasure and satisfaction without the bestiality that followed from excessive drinking. We have got that beer now (Lord Woolton went on); people are enjoying it, and it is doing them at any rate very little harm." These reasons—and no doubt there are others—account for the fact that, whereas in 1941 in the Metropolitan Police area 10,799 persons were convicted of drunkenness, in 1942 the number had dropped to 7,491. Most of the other great cities, and indeed the majority of our towns and counties, show similar decreases.

ANOTHER vivid sidelight on the nation's drinking habits shows us the women visiting public houses regularly. "In the past the public house has been, in the main, a man's sanctum," says the Chief Constable of Newport, Mon.—his words are quoted in the Fellowship of Freedom and Reform's Bulletin for April; "Now it would appear that women are not only doing men's work, but are gradually acquiring the habits of men. This applies to women in the Services as well as to those in industry." Rightly enough, the Chief Constable thinks that this constitutes an interesting sociological problem which must have its bearing on future licensing legislation. Should women be kept apart from men, and separate rooms be provided for them on licensed premises, he asks; or should there be a revolutionary alteration in the design of public houses—these to be built with open façades, with "nothing to suggest that the customers are being hidden from public view, and encouragement given to make licensed premises the resort of the family as are wine shops and beer gardens in some continental countries?" One may feel a certain wry amusement from the reflection that the frosted windows of the saloon bar may be put there by magistrates' behest so that the people passing along the street shall not be demoralized by the spectacle of men (and women) "knocking back" their mild-and-bitter . . .

SO the Navy knows its Shakespeare . . . During a recent operation in northern waters, in bitter weather, with frequent snowstorms, when the sea was covered with sludge ice, a sudden call to "Action stations" sounded on a British cruiser. Apparently the Yeoman of Signals had sighted an enemy vessel which *might* have been the Luetzow. Steaming "flat out" through the storm, with her guns trained in the direction of the supposed enemy cruiser, the ship at daybreak finally came out "into the clear" to find—nothing at all! After a lengthy consultation on the bridge, the conclusion was reluctantly reached that what had been seen was only a shadow on the snowstorm. Whereupon, says Arthur Oakeshott, Reuters Special Correspondent, who was there at the time, the Admiral caused the following signal to be sent to the other cruisers in company: "Macbeth, Act IV, Scene I, lines 110 and 111." When turned up this was found to be, "Come like shadows, so depart!" Mr. Oakeshott then proffered a gem from Julius Caesar, which the Admiral signalled also: "Ha! Who comes here? I think it is the weakness of mine eyes that shapes this monstrous apparition." Next the Admiral noticed that the guiding cruiser had suddenly turned incorrectly: "Haven't you turned the wrong way?" he signalled. Swift came the reply: "Sorry, we were so busy looking up our Shakespearean signal books." Another of the cruisers straightway capped this with a further Macbeth quotation: "Turn, Hell-hound turn!" Not surprisingly the erring vessel is now known as H.M.S. Hellhound.

NEVER since the Napoleonic age have pamphlets had such a vogue as now, when limited supplies of paper and limited leisure for reading make it necessary that as much information as possible shall be given in the smallest possible space. Among the host of pamphlets that are appearing a very high place must be accorded to the series on World Affairs, published by the Oxford University Press. Some noteworthy additions of recent appearance are Violet Conolly's Soviet Asia, and J. H. Stembridge's Atlas of the U.S.S.R. (Mr. Stembridge's Atlas of the U.S.S.R. in the same series appeared last year). Over four million copies of the World Affairs series have been sold. Now the first numbers have appeared of another sixpenny series, the Oxford Pamphlets on Home Affairs. How Britain is Governed, by Mr. R. B. McCallum, is the first; and its companions are Mr. R. F. Harrod's Britain's Future Population, Professor A. G. Pigou's Transition from War to Peace, and The Newspaper, by Mr. Ivor Thomas, M.P. All are first-rate, but perhaps I may be permitted to give an individual pat on the back to a fellow journalist's attempt to convey a mass of information concerning the British Press to that great body of readers who seldom have even the foggiest notion of the immense effort and enterprise involved in the production of their favourite newspaper.

WITH this number we have completed Volume 6 of THE WAR ILLUSTRATED. Those of my readers who are having their loose Parts bound in volume form will find in this page brief instructions how to go about it. As it may be assumed that all who will bind Volume 6 have already had the preceding volumes bound, nothing more than a reminder and instructions here given are needed. But the publishers ask me to emphasize that all loose Parts sent for binding must be free from pencil or ink marks of any kind. That is most important. And once again I would remind those subscribers that the difficulties of labour and material which have vastly increased since the easier days when our first two Volumes were produced, have in no way diminished during the run of Volume 6, and our publishers will greatly appreciate the forbearance of subscribers in allowing much more than the ordinary time for the execution of their binding orders. They can have the assurance that everything possible is done to expedite the work, as well as to provide the best workmanship and material at reasonable prices. Compared with almost all other commodities, the value given in the bound volume of THE WAR ILLUSTRATED is exceptional. I am more than satisfied at the response of my readers to the final change which transformed the publication into a fortnightly, without any advertising wrapper and using every inch of space to the best advantage. The introduction of an extra colour into some of our pages will enrich the bound volumes, which in themselves will not only contain a remarkable record of events throughout the War, but will indicate the changing conditions of production that prevailed during their publication.

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The War Illustrated VOLUME 6

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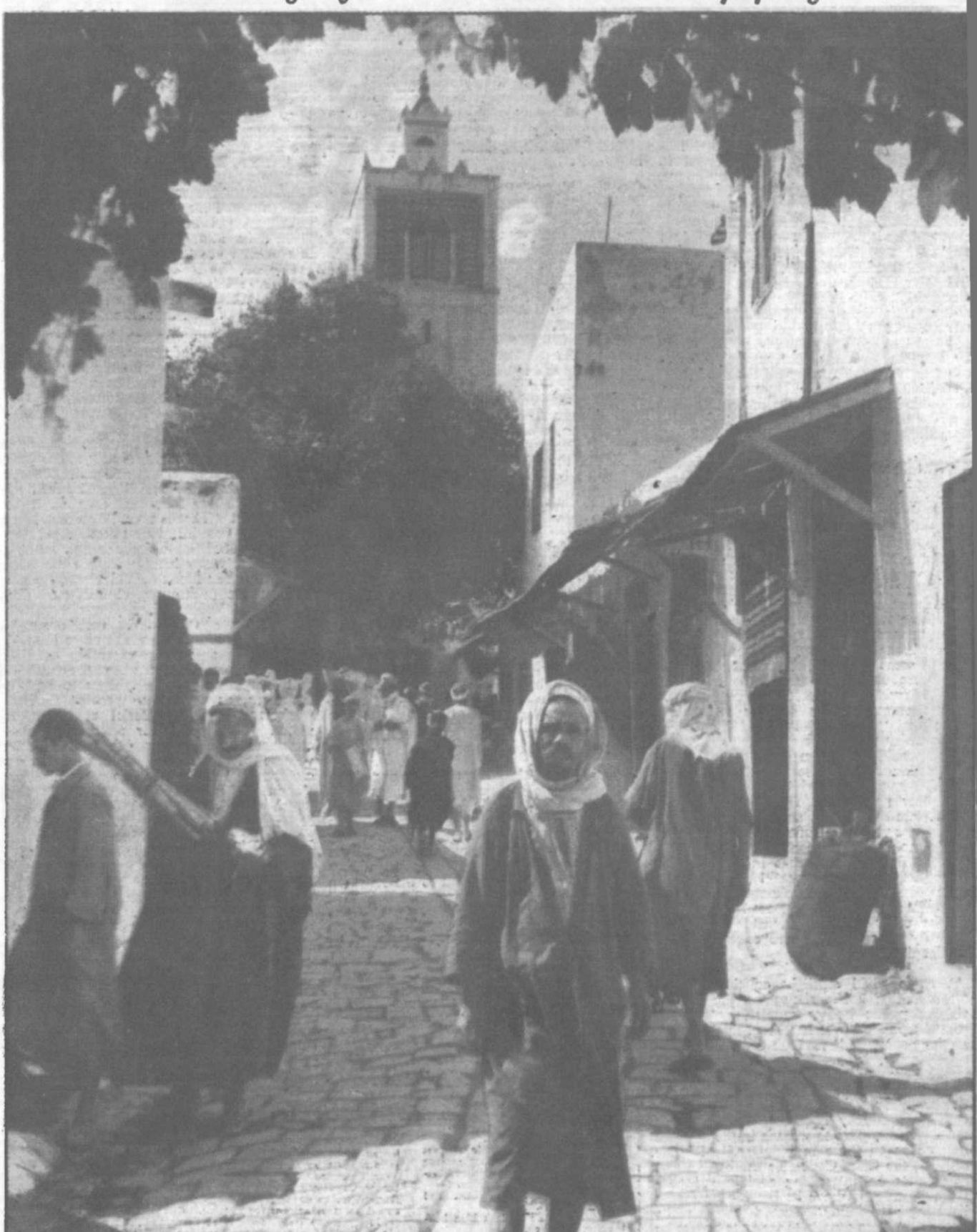
Arab Setting for a British Supply Base



STREET SCENE IN SOUK-EL-ARBA, a key town in the Northern sector of the Tunisian front. Situated W. of Medjez-el-Bab on the Mejerda River and the main Bizerta line, this road and rail centre became one of our most important supply bases, feeding as it did the First Army's growing offensive in the vital Medjez-el-Bab region—the offensive which on May 7 carried it triumphant into Tunis. *Photo, Paul Popper*

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